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SONGS OF PRAISE

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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: "Love leading the Pilgrim - Study of Birds: Finches," *Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1897*, via [Birmingham Museums Trust](#)

Songs of Praise

Photo: "Cloud Study (Early Evening)," *Simon Denis*, via [The Met Museum](#)

This month's theme, songs of praise, was meant as a prompt to get writers thinking about their understanding of worship. Music is one way to do this: the sublime feeling of having melody and rhythm overtake the body, orienting one towards the feeling of something exceeding the material world. When articles came in, I was surprised by how many took the theme towards other expressions of worship, particularly regarding social justice causes like World Refugee day, inclusivity in liturgy, and economic justice.

There is a unity between the transcendent feeling that art and music brings and witnessing the presence of God in all human beings. What is it about worship that makes us both drawn to care for others and to express something beyond what is immediately knowable?

The experience of seeing divine love in other people also reveals a rift between the way the world is and the way things should be if we were to really take seriously the fact of our being part of the Body of Christ. One way to think about worship is that which points to this gap, inspiring us to see God in all things and also unsettling us because we aren't currently living that way.

In this issue, Edmund Laldin explores the implications of understanding liturgy as the "work of the people." He asks important questions about how Anglicans must reflect the full diversity of their congregations through liturgical practice.

Next, three interviews with past synod delegates give insight into the experience of attending synod and the relationship between the institutional practices of the Diocese and their experiences of God within it.

Dr. Ebele Felix's article offers possible modifications to the Anglican liturgy to celebrate the voices of Black Anglicans. This article places these modified liturgies in context of the longer history of Black Anglican's contributions to shaping the Church's musical identity.

Gary Russell follows up on his Synod interview in an article titled "What is the Anglican Franciscan Order?" Russell describes the journey undertaken by members of the order and calls for those interested to reach out and learn more.

Earlier this year, Archbishop Linda Nicholls invited dioceses to create a Refugee Sunday in the leadup to World Refugee Day. Marlene Smith writes about the work Anglicans have done through the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) to support refugees and argues that creating a Refugee Day would help uplift the ministries involved in supporting refugees.

Last, a parish profile with St. Thomas Weston discusses the inspiring work of "christiaction" carried out by this community and invites all readers to join St. Thomas for their Pride Barbecue on June 2nd.

I hope you enjoy this month's article.



MISHA PENSATO

Misha Pensato is the editor of Rupert's Land News

Photo: [Jon Tyson](#)

Songs of Praise

The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.'

Luke 10.17-18

We sing songs of praise to our God, for God saves the human family. God sets all free to accomplish his purpose: that the whole of creation may flourish and resound with gratuitous harmonic resonance.

By God's grace, the One Body of Christ walked the meandering path which leads only to the Body's out-pouring of self to be a vehicle of God's great salvation. Our hymns and songs rehearse the narrative of Jesus' courage and determination, calling the Church to ready itself as Jesus' Body. Holy Week takes us through the experience of death, touching the whole world at its core. Sorrowful laments, reproaches, and litanies, haunting melodies indelibly imprint in our memory; these are the chords of faithful trust and hope in Jesus' teaching. It is by God's grace that even at the grave and gate of death we sing: "Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" This is nothing less than God's doing. Christ calls His Body to join His resurrection. Christ's selfless sacrifice makes the Body Christ's Easter home, the sanctuary of celebration, praise, and worship intended to shape disciples.

Christ's Easter, now, far past the grave and gate of death, is the symphonic song of Jesus' disciples. Jesus' disciples are the wide array of unique notes and textures pouring upon the earth for all who have the spiritual ears to listen and the spiritual capacity to join the song in every imaginable way possible. In God, there is no tone-deafness, only sheer beauty. God has made humans, especially those who feel broken and forgotten, to be exquisite instruments of

harmonic resonance that binds, heals, protects, and sustains the perfection of all that God has made.

We need not be disappointed when we discover the song has different melodies within, or does not rest unanimously; it is acceptable to be equally disturbed and elated by the song as it reaches twists and turns that seem out of time. We can choose to hear the Master's teaching in the awkward music of life as expressions of God's love bursting into the world. Music that disrupts and disturbs creates space for Jesus' story to be carried forward for future generations. It creates openness for disciples to flourish, doing all in our power to support the work of Christ.

We need not fear what possible new or adapted songs we shall hear in Christ's Easter disciples. From the beginning, the foundation of the Word has equipped the keepers of musical memory and theory to see and train the unique and precious gifts that God imparts to all people. Like the seventy disciples, we return to our communities of faith from the places Jesus intended to go, praising God with unique dialects, expressions, and practices in the harmonic resonance of God. Discovering God, whom we faithfully trust and hope, already teaching the song before our arrival, has freed us to empty ourselves still more to hear profoundly beautiful new harmonies that draw us closer into Jesus.

Let us, in ALL our unique voices, continue as freely sent instruments of God's eternal song which is the harmonic resonance for the whole of Creation.



GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Bishop of Rupert's Land

Photo: [Austin Pacheco](#)

Sing a New Song unto the Lord: The Relationship of Music and Liturgy

EDMUND LALDIN

One of the definitions of liturgy is the 'work of the people.' It simply means that the liturgy is composed for and by the worshipping community to be relevant and representative of their needs, concerns, thanksgivings, and inspiration for the kingdom of God. All of the above are reflected and presented in the sermon and the prayers of the people.

Some parishes have placed an intercession book in the Narthex for the members to put in their petitions. These petitions can be the names of ill members, for social ministries, and for peace in war-torn areas of the world. Prayers of the people leader integrates the petitions to make them representative of the community. The sermon, or homily, is

a monologue and, ultimately, is the prerogative of the preacher. The preacher may decide to reflect on the current issues and struggles of the worshipping community.

However, the preacher can take an expositional approach and, through critical examination, present a compelling and expansive interpretation of the sacred scripture. Both methods will appeal to and speak to some members of the congregation while ultimately isolating others. How a sermon can reflect the intricacies of the congregation and be relational is a topic for another discussion. This essay discusses ways to make liturgy representative of and relevant to the congregation.

Many years ago, a server asked me why we used the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) liturgy. I explained the BCP's liturgical tradition and heritage to her. We discussed the BCP's theology, imagery, and language and presented those as the reasons for it being the official prayer book of the Anglican Church of Canada. But she was confused and a bit bored. She asked me why no one speaks this form of English anymore. How can it be relevant if this form of English language is not spoken? If a Caucasian teenager struggled to comprehend the language, how can a New Canadian comprehend the service, fully participate, and own the liturgy? Her question was valid. Inclusivity is crucial in our liturgy. We must ensure that everyone, regardless of their background or language, can understand and participate in our worship.

The beauty of liturgical churches is the set liturgy celebrated in every church. The BAS has options for the opening sentences, prayers of the people, and the Eucharistic prayers. These options mould the liturgy to reflect the season of the Church's calendar. Thus, we can say the sentences pertinent to the Lenten season and change them at Easter to celebrate the glorious resurrection of Jesus. These options make liturgy relatable and relevant to the worshippers. However, the ingenuity and unique texture of each congregation is not fully represented in the BCP's set sentences and prayers.

Many Anglican Churches have made the language accessible, prayers relevant, and sentences pertinent to our pursuit of celebrating contextual liturgy. However, these changes still do not reflect the uniqueness of the gathered community. Music and hymns can help make the liturgy reflect the specificity of the worshipping community. Everyone participates in the hymns – some sing, others

tap their feet and hands or close their eyes to listen and reflect on the hymns.

Incidentally, not every music or hymn represents congregational diversity. The Choral tradition with a pipe organ is associated with and presented as the music tradition of the Anglican Church. It might be so in some local parishes. Unfortunately, most local churches have neither the resources nor musical heritage to institute choral traditions as worship music. Also, choral tradition fails to reflect the nature of the congregation. Thus, carefully chosen and enthusiastically sung music and hymns can make the liturgy inclusive and reflective.

Many local churches in Canada utilise different musical instruments. In this diocese, pianos, guitars, drums, harmonica, bass guitars, and other instruments are all used regularly. This variety exhibits parish leadership commitment to engage its members, utilising the local resources and finding the unique musicology of the congregation. In a multi-cultural Canada, this flexibility in worship music allows different cultures and traditions to integrate and make a joyful noise to God.

In conclusion, music and hymns can transform ACC's congregations from homogenous to heterogeneous communities. Music and the joyful sound can engage every age group, ethnicity and other diversity to live out the image of all God's children gathered around the table, celebrating and praising God. We want to be inclusive, which is a straightforward statement – to become 'inclusive' expects open minds, discerning hearts, and obedience to the Holy Spirit to ensure that all God's children can sing in the choir.



EDMUND LALDIN

Edmund Laldin was born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan. Liberation Theology and his father's ministry were the catalyst for his call to ministry. Edmund Laldin was ordained in 1995 and has served in the dioceses of Quebec, Western Newfoundland, and Rupert's Land. At present, he is the Incumbent of St. Saviour's church. His academic interest include Preaching, liturgy, and how to make church accessible to the marginalised.



Photo: [Jennifer R.](#)

R L N

Synod Delegates Speak

SUSAN ROE-FINLAY

RLN: How did you first become a Synod Delegate?

SRF: At first [St. Luke's] just needed someone to be a delegate and I thought I could do that. I'd been in my parish long enough I thought I knew enough. That was in the late 80s.

RLN: Did you talk with any former synod delegates?

SRF: I talked to the current ones before me. They said that unless it's a year when you're electing a Bishop, the business of the diocese is straightforward and I was interested in that. I had a long absence from church. When I came back to church, I was interested in understanding how it worked and how it all fit together.

RLN: What experiences of attending Synod have stood out the most to you?

SRF: The connectedness of it all. Even though the different

parishes all have their own personalities, there's this incredible bond among them and I think when you work at the diocesan level you see that more. I like that feeling of bigger community and I was thrilled with the level of cooperation.

I left church out of frustration with it being such a 'man made' thing. When I came back into church, I think I found the spirit in it. I was really interested in how the spirit was working in the larger community and the sense of connectedness not only within our Diocese, but over the centuries and over the rest of the world wide communion. I don't think I'd had a sense of that before.

RLN: Where have you seen God at work in Synod?

SRF: Probably it would be in the communal acts of worship and in the references to scripture or Anglican tradition. It was like "we know what we're talking about, we're in this together." I think before I had only seen the frustration between people. That says a lot about my own immaturity, but also about my deepening spiritual core at that point.

RLN: What advice would you have for others interested in letting their name stand for Synod?

SRF: When I talk with them I point out the connectedness, it's so much more than our little parish, and I point out the wonderful people I've met there and how there's no sense of rivalry, it's more a sense of comradeship. I say to people who like institutions that it's a way to understand how this one works and it's a way to contribute to it. It depends on who I'm talking to, which parts I pull out and how well I know them to know which hook will catch.

RLN: In my job as editor, I hear a lot of desire from people in different parishes for that sense of a bigger community. How could synod do more to bring that together?

SRF: I think the things that Ryan Turnbull is starting with courses at the college or at the Cathedral makes them feel less parish centered, it spreads them out more. Or maybe having them in a different parish in a deliberate way.

The sense that individual parishes are closing, people are thinking "where I am going to have to go, what else would be a comfortable niche for me?" So it's partly [out of] interest and partly self-preservation I think. When a parish closed twenty years ago it was a really awful event. Now it's so much more commonplace. It's still sad and people

are still grieving but people are more aware of what's going on in other places.



Susan Roe-Finlay is a retired nurse/diabetes educator who has served as Lay Reader for many years after completing Education for Ministry. She is a cradle Anglican who suffered a long period of doubt in her early adulthood and now deeply appreciates her deep/deepening faith. Serving with and in her Faith Community is a pleasure and great joy.

BEN MCGILLVARY

RLN: How did you first become a Synod Delegate?

BM: Through St. John's Cathedral. Dean Paul Johnson was the one who recommended me. I'm on Diocesan Council.

RLN: What made you interested in Synod?

BM: Just getting to meet people from other parts of the diocese and getting to see how they do business.

RLN: What experiences at Synod stood out to you the most?

BM: Just the business in general.

RLN: Where have you seen God at work at Synod?

BM: Through the votes and how everyone gets to vote with cards.

RLN: What advice would you have for others who are interested in being Synod Delegates?

BM: I would just say that it's a great opportunity to get involved in the diocese.



Ben McGillivary is a Parishioner who has attended three parishes since becoming an Anglican Christian and has attended St. Stephen's, St. Saviours, and now St. John's Cathedral. Ben was a Lay Delegate for the Cathedral for the Diocesan Synod in 2022 and also sits on Diocesan Council as a Member.

GARY RUSSELL

RLN: How did you become a synod delegate?

GR: I used to work as full time staff for the Manitoba Federation of Labour. So I had developed some skills in getting people to work together and bringing disparate interests together and getting people talking productively together. I felt I had developed some skills in the labour movement and I had a feeling that I wanted to bring these skills to the church. The church has got to be organized, we've got to get people talking to each other.

I had been elected to [diocesan] council at that time and then I started going to China every year to teach economics. So I went to a council meeting around 2000 saying "well I'm not around much so I have to resign."

I was starting to be at the phase where I wasn't satisfied with economics anymore. The mainstream of economic theory is rather right-wing and I wanted to see how other people live and how other people think. So when I was teaching economics in China, I started to realize I didn't believe in Western economics.

I've ended up concluding largely [by writing a] textbook on Franciscan economics which you can find at radicalgrace.ca

What's wrong with economics is it lacks a moral base and a spiritual base entirely. It's a thousand percent materialist and individualistic. I have 9 themes in that workbook and the first one I call "denial of grace." The highest value in mainstream economics is fair trade which means I give as much as I get and the ideal is everybody is giving as much as they get.

Christ didn't say "Give as much as you get," Christ just said "give."

RLN: How do you bring those values to Synod?

GR: I also went to General Synod in Calgary last summer. The Indigenous caucus there is very strong and I can work with them on more spiritual issues. I've also joined the Anglican Franciscan order and in reimagining economics in my mind I've found a lot of common ground between Franciscan economics and Indigenous economics.

RLN: What experiences at Synod have stood out to you the most?

GR: My issue with the financial management committee in General Synod is that it's been kind of in denial about the

decline of membership and decline of revenues and I was complaining that we're doing business as usual even though it ain't business as usual. There are churches closing all over the place. It's starting in recent months to pick up on that and rethink our structures and restructure our thinking. Of course it's only natural to be in denial at first.

There are Anglican organizations that are still saying, "We need to draw people back into the church." Quite contrary to that I'm saying, "Go out into the community, like Acts of the Apostles, and you'll find there are a lot of people who are doing God's work and don't even know it." Don't try and drag them into the church, but work together on finding the spirit in all kinds of things that can be done.

I'm very encouraged that people are starting to think this way on council.

RLN: What advice would you give to people who are interested in being nominated for Synod?

GR: There's often competition. You kind of have to be seen as having a mission that relates to that. You can't just step up and say, "I want to be a delegate" because there may be other people who are more involved than you are.

RLN: How can Synod help create a bigger sense of community for people in the diocese?

GR: Synod is a legislative body but it's also a community. Sometimes I go to it more for the community than for the actual work and I think building bonds between people is just as important as the legislation you're doing.



Since joining our church 30 years ago, Gary has been active at every level. After retiring, he also joined the Anglican Franciscan Order. He has decided to devote these senior years to serving his church — from Parish to Synod to Council. — hoping to apply the skills he has learned over the years to keeping the church well managed.

Celebrating the Voices of Black Anglicans

DR. EBELE FELIX

When we consider the broader framework of worship, there are many diverse and interconnected components that come together to create a meaningful and holistic expression of faith. In this tapestry, there exists a melody that transcends time and space—a song of praise that echoes the voices of generations past and present. Within the Anglican Church, this symphony of faith finds resonance in the vibrant expressions of Black Anglicans, whose rich heritage and unique experiences infuse worship with depth, passion, and soul-stirring resonance.

Exploring the intersections of faith and music through the lens of worship offers a rich tapestry of experiences and expressions. From traditional hymns that evoke a sense of reverence and awe, to contemporary worship songs that resonate with a more personal connection to the divine, the spectrum of musical expression within religious contexts is vast.

When this is done in the context of Black Anglicans, it offers a unique opportunity to uplift voices that have often been marginalized or overlooked within the Anglican Church. Black Anglicans have made significant contributions to both the musical heritage and spiritual practices of the Church, enriching its worship traditions with their unique expressions of faith and culture.

Gospel music, with its roots in the African American religious experience, has been integral to the worship

practices of many Black Anglicans, infusing services with energy, passion, and a deep sense of spiritual connection. Exploring the ways in which gospel music has been incorporated into Anglican liturgies, from traditional hymns to contemporary gospel arrangements, can shed light on the dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and religious tradition.

Additionally, this writing could explore the rich history of Black Anglican composers and musicians who have contributed to the Church's musical canon. From pioneers like Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, to contemporary artists like Moses Hogan and Jacqueline Hairston, Black Anglicans have played a vital role in shaping the Church's musical identity, blending elements of African American musical traditions with Anglican liturgical forms to create powerful and evocative compositions.

Furthermore, examining the experiences of Black Anglicans within the broader Anglican communion can provide insight into the challenges and opportunities they face in navigating issues of race, identity, and belonging and amplifies the voices of Black Anglicans within predominantly white congregations. Also, sharing their stories, struggles, and triumphs can help foster greater awareness, understanding, and solidarity within the Church.

Overall, writing on a topic which explores the intersections of faith, music, and worship among Black Anglicans



Photo: KaLisa Veer

has the potential to celebrate their rich cultural heritage, honor their contributions to the Anglican tradition, and inspire dialogue and transformation within the Church towards greater inclusivity and justice.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY: A MODIFIED LITURGY THAT CAN BE USED FOR CELEBRATING THE VOICES OF BLACK ANGLICANS

Considering these reflections, the liturgy of the Anglican Church of Canada can be modified to look like this modified version below—a liturgy which embraces the diverse expressions of faith, music, and worship within the Black Anglican communities while affirming the Church's commitment to justice, reconciliation, and healing.

Opening Hymn: "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

As the congregation gathers, they are invited to join in singing a song like "Lift Every Voice and Sing," often referred to as the Black national anthem. With its stirring lyrics and uplifting melody, this hymn serves as a powerful invocation of resilience, perseverance, and hope, setting the tone for a worship experience that celebrates the richness of Black Anglican heritage.

Psalmody or hymn can be sung for instance "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Following the opening hymn, the congregation can engage in the chanting of Psalm 136 or a similar psalm, accompanied by a gospel arrangement of the timeless hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Through call and response, the congregation affirms God's steadfast love and faithfulness, drawing strength from the assurance that God's mercies endure forever.

Prayers of the People:

During the prayers of the people, special attention should be given to lifting the voices and concerns of marginalized communities, including Black Anglicans. Prayers are offered for justice, reconciliation, and healing, acknowledging the pain and suffering caused by systemic racism and oppression while affirming the Church's commitment to working towards a more just and equitable society.

Eucharistic Prayer: The Table of Inclusion and Welcome

As the Eucharistic prayer is offered, emphasis should be placed on the inclusive and welcoming nature of God's

table, where all are invited to partake of the bread and wine regardless of race, ethnicity, or background. Through the sharing of this sacred meal, the barriers that divide us are broken down, and we are a united body in Christ.

Closing Hymn: "We Shall Overcome"

The liturgy can conclude with the singing of a hymn like "We Shall Overcome," a powerful anthem of hope and solidarity that has been a rallying cry for social justice movements around the world. As the congregation raises their voices in unity, they are reminded of the ongoing journey towards liberation and freedom, trusting in God's promise of a future where justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

By embracing the intersections of faith, music, and worship within Black Anglican communities, the Anglican Church of Canada affirms its commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and justice. Through the celebration of gospel music, the honoring of Black Anglican composers and musicians, and the navigation of the challenges and opportunities facing Black Anglicans, the Church bears witness to the transformative power of faith and community in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

As we journey through the intersections of faith and music, we are invited to explore the diverse approaches to worship that arise from the diverse experiences of Black Anglicans within the Anglican communion. Their voices, long marginalized and often overlooked, rise like a chorus of angels, guiding us towards a deeper understanding of the transformative power of praise within the Church. As we do so, may we embrace the richness of their worship expressions, honoring their contributions and fostering greater diversity and inclusion within our faith communities.



DR. EBELE FELIX

Dr. Ebele Felix is a seasoned educationist with a comprehensive background in all levels of education. With extensive experience spanning Nigeria and Canada, she has excelled in various roles including teaching, counseling, administration, public speaking, training, customer service, the health sector, and insurance.

Why Refugee Sunday?

MARLENE SMITH

Earlier this year the Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, issued an invitation to dioceses and parishes across the country to mark a Refugee Sunday at some point in the lead up to World Refugee Day (June 20) or at some other time in the year.

In 2016, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) circulated a questionnaire to its members asking a series of questions about if and how “Faith” has played a role in the work of its members. The responses were varied and powerful:

I think faith in a loving God supports a commitment to kindness and social responsibility. My personal response to the needs of refugees is a direct result of seeing news reports depicting tremendous brutality. I had to do something to counter that anger and violence.

Faith played a big role in our decision to sponsor a refugee family. Our church wanted to do something and not just say that “someone” should do something with regards to the refugee situation that we are witnessing every day in the news.



Photo: Annie Spratt

When the questionnaire was issued in 2016 the worldwide numbers of refugee and displaced people stood at 65 million. Today, in 2024, that number stands at over 100 million. In other words, the number of “strangers” seeking safety, refuge, and a place to call home, has grown exponentially.

At our baptism we – or our parents on our behalf – are asked a series of Baptismal Covenant questions: “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?” and “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” We respond: “I will, with God’s help.” Those two questions, along with the others posed in the Covenant now find expression in the [Five Marks of Mission](#) of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Church of Canada, through the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), has been responding to refugees and displaced persons ever since its founding in 1959. The following year was declared World Refugee Year by the United Nations and PWRDF (the “D” was added in 1969), earmarked \$100,000 of the \$162,000 raised in its first appeal for refugees overseas. In partnership with church-based and secular refugee-serving agencies, that work continues to this day.

In 1979 in response to the Indo-Chinese “boat people” crisis, the Canadian government established the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. Anglican dioceses were among the first to respond. Today, 15 dioceses across the country are Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) with Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Those SAHs are managed by a tireless, expert, and gifted group of Refugee Coordinators, some paid, others volunteer. In the 45 years of the program approximately 350,000 have been sponsored to settle in Canada through faith-based, ethnic, and secular SAHs – Canadians reaching out to their global neighbours and saying: “You are welcome here.”

As noted, these are ministries carried out not simply because of what Anglicans say we believe, but because of who we say we are. They are fundamental to our identity as Anglicans, and fundamental to the ways in which we live out our faith. But unless your parish has undertaken a refugee sponsorship, much of the ministry by PWRDF partners overseas and Refugee Coordinators here in Canada is done quietly and away from the view of Anglicans “in the pew.”

Refugee Sunday is an opportunity to affirm what we believe and who we are. It is an opportunity to learn about, and lift up in prayer, those who carry out these ministries and all those who have been forced to flee their homes, either as internally displaced people (IDPs)

in their country of origin, or as refugees in neighbouring or distant lands. It is an opportunity to affirm the many gifts we receive when we welcome the stranger: gifts of friendship, of insights, of skills, knowledge, and wisdom that refugees bring to share with us. And it is an opportunity for us to be transformed together. As another respondent to that 2016 CCR questionnaire wrote,

One of our core values is Mutual Transformation, the recognition that we are diverse, and that through an effort to listen well, we learn and grow. Living closely with refugee claimants has enriched our community’s experience of faith.

To which we can all say, Amen.

MARLENE SMITH

Marlene Smith has been the Refugee Coordinator for the Diocese since 2020 after Gail Schnabl “retired” in March of that year. This volunteer position functions under Missions and Ministry. The Diocese has a legal Agreement with the Federal Government to sponsor refugees for re-settlement to Canada under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Programme - one means by which Canada expresses its humanitarian tradition. It fulfills the actions of “loving our neighbours as ourselves” and “welcoming the stranger” as the church – the Body of Christ - seeks to live in relationship with each other. It is an experience that begins with a meeting of strangers, engaging with people we would probably never meet in our lifetime, then developing a friendship of compassion and care when the refugee-newcomer arrives. It is truly faith in action.

Marlene currently worships at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, downtown Winnipeg.



Photo: [The Church](#)

What is the Anglican Franciscan Order?

GARY RUSSELL

Do you sometimes feel you want to take your faith to a deeper commitment? Church services and church activities are great, and you want to keep honouring them, but maybe you also want to give of yourself at a deeper level. Maybe you want to explore Christian commitment with free-thinking individuals what it truly means to practice what you preach. Welcome to the spirit of Francis of Assisi.

The Society of Saint Francis (TSSF) is an Anglican Order of Franciscans dedicated to working with each other to practice a clean and committed lifestyle in the manner of Francis. We're the *Third Order*, that means we don't live together in community — but rather live out in the world with our jobs and families — and put our beliefs about Christ's love into practice in our daily lives.

Like many religious orders, we practice a *Rule of Life*. Through it we discipline ourselves and channel our lives through a set of practices — which shape our response to God and Christ through studying and emulating Francis as we continue to work through our church.

The journey begins as a *Novice* in the Order — a period of two years when we're in regular touch with a Formation Counsellor who guides us through the challenges of adapting to our Rule of Life. In my time as a Novice, it felt more like transformation. In the second year we meet online regularly with other novices and share our formation

experiences. Then finally we become a full member and are called *Professed*. Actually, there's an alternative path, called an *Associate* of the Order. It calls for a less rigorous commitment. It can be either step along the way or as far as you want to go, but you're still part of the family.

We are a small band of Franciscans here in Rupert's Land, calling ourselves the *Red River Fellowship*. But our regular meetings include a few people I call "tire kickers" who just want to see what we're all about. And they're welcome with no pressure to take the next step. Email Gary at gary@gwrussell.com if you'd like to kick some tires. Check out tssf.org.



GARY RUSSELL

Since joining our church 30 years ago, Gary has been active at every level. After retiring, he also joined the Anglican Franciscan Order. He has decided to devote these senior years to serving his church — from Parish to Synod to Council. — hoping to apply the skills he has learned over the years to keeping the church well managed.

Parish Profile: St. Thomas Weston

INTERVIEW WITH THE REV. R SUSAN SMANDYCH,
INCUMBENT AND INCUMBANT'S WARDEN CAS-
SANDRA GOLONDRINA.

RLN: Could you tell me about where your parish is located?

SS: St. Thomas is between railway lines in the northwest corner of the city by Notre Dame. Currently it's one of the most socio-economically challenged neighbourhoods in Winnipeg. What it makes up for in terms of being a precarious neighbourhood is the beautiful warmth of the community here.

RLN: Who comes to your parish?

SS: It's probably one of the smaller parishes within the Diocese in terms of people who are registered and regularly come. It used to be a shared ministry, lay leaders led it for a decade. It was at risk of shutting down around 2019, but then there was a very strong lay leader push to keep it open and to reinvent themselves.

Now there's a core group of between 5-10 lay people who really serve as the church in that community. They're all people who work full time as well. In terms of average Anglican age, they're probably 20 years younger than most average Anglicans: this community is mostly around 40-50 years old. One of our wardens is 24 years old which is unheard of in the Diocese in terms of having young people engaged.

Palm Sunday was the fourth anniversary of the takeout meal program which started just before covid. In the last calendar year, the church has served over 12,000 meals. This happens on Wednesday evenings, it's our big activity each week in addition to Sunday services.

That's the main food ministry but what that catalyzes is "Christiaction." Basically, it's "Christianity in action." That's a term people have coined here long before I came. It's really about being with the community and understanding the needs of the community. People come for food, but people are also offering and receiving spiritual nourishment as well.

RLN: How have you seen the relationships formed through service work change the parish?

SS: There's an intentionality where people make a huge effort



to get to know the people, they're not just people queuing up for food, it's really a sense of community and hospitality that is quite intriguing. No one is a stranger. They're our guests for supper.

People who've been evicted from whatever housing they were in, they come to get food but also whatever we can help them with in terms of finding clothes, bedding, or pillows, or things like that to make them as comfortable as possible. People who have had traumatic experiences and who are currently experiencing trauma, they are also very welcome in the community.

CG: I do not personally remember a time when this parish has had this kind of relationship with the community. People actually thought we were closed, which we almost did in 2019. But people know that we are here, people know that they can come to us, people knock on our door. They will ask us for help in some of the most vulnerable times in their lives which is a true and wonderful blessing.

RLN: How did the Covid-19 pandemic change the parish?

CG: When one door closes, the kitchen door opens. That was a pivotal moment for us.

Our Kreative Kids art program provided a healthy snack and a place for kids [before the pandemic] and when it shut down [due to Covid restrictions], these two sisters were like "how do we still provide for these families?" So we started a takeout meal program two nights a week, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Kreative Kids is back on Fridays now. Now we serve dinner on Wednesdays and provide crafts for the younger and younger-at-heart to take home. The takeout meal on Wednesdays started with 11 families and now over 75 families access our dinner program. Some youth who used to attend Kreative Kids volunteer at the dinner program and literally fight over who is going to take out the garbage. They pack groceries, they serve the dinner guests, wash the floor, and put things away. They're super excited.

SS: When I was a Deacon I visited about 20 plus parishes and I can safely say there are not many parishes if any that have



youth that are so beyond keen to come and this is entirely volunteer. They're not parishioners per se but they come willingly.

RLN: What does worship look like at St. Thomas?

CG: One of my favourite parts of service is that we start our service with our worship team praying on the steps of the church. It started because everytime I would open that door, I would pray on those stairs before service. Others would gather, and as the group got bigger, I would like to invite everyone who is interested to just go say a prayer. Sometimes we wave to people as they walk by us and then we say, "let's church!" and we go in and we do church.

SS: When I first started at St. Thomas, someone from another parish said, "How do you feel about them only having Eucharist every second Sunday?" I said, "I need to correct you on that, St. Thomas has Eucharist every single Wednesday." When they are feeding people, it's an altar of the heart. There's a Eucharist we do in the confines of the liturgy and then there's the Eucharist we do every single moment.

CG: It really is living out baptismal covenants in every interaction in our lives all of the time, that's what we strive for. Are we successful all of the time? No. But we try really, really hard and we encourage everyone else to do it also.

RLN: What are the challenges your parish is currently facing?

CG: To be honest, finances are desperate. But the good lord keeps giving to us. It's going to cause a great deal of damage to the building if we don't get a new roof within the next few years. We pay for zero staff, everything is done by volunteers or by our part time clergy, whose stipend has been paid for by the diocese. Our future is uncertain, but we keep pushing forward

SS: We're also working with a consultant to do the strategic plan for the parish. The church operates with about 90 percent of its income from grants. We're trying to push that forward with my own background in grants management as well.

CG: For me, sharing resources, sharing knowledge feels like second nature. There's a lot of lived experience in our leadership. I call it a motley crew of individuals with gifts

and talents of such a wide array that turn into this wonderful thing. Life experience and resource sharing, understanding what the community needs and if it's something we help with or if we share where to find that help. We don't have to solve all the problems, but if we know an answer, why would we keep that to ourselves.

The things that we're talking about don't just happen within our church, this is what we're seeing in the community as well. People see each other sharing resources or they're telling us about resources and letting us know where we can tap into things. We cannot take credit for what's happening but I will say that we've helped facilitate a space and a sense of community where we're seeing this community happen, meet and grow and share and support each other and it's quite fantastic.

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

CG: Loaves and fishes and shining the Christ light brightly, all of the time. And Christiaction of course!

SS: I would say: love in action.

St. Thomas & Kreative Kids invite you to join them in attending the Pride Parade on June 2nd which will be followed by worship at 4:00 p.m., and then a community BBQ at 5:30 p.m.