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St John's Theology Hub

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FOR EVERY SEASON

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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: "St John the Divine, NYC" by [Robert Thiemann](#)

For Every Season

Photo: [Trails](#)

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

For me, beginning this job is a new season — and one which I hope is fruitful for all. My name is Cinna, and I am delighted to be the editor of Rupert's Land News. I am grateful to Bishop Geoff and the advisory board for this opportunity, and to Misha for her work over the last year and the training she has given me.

As a part of God's creation, we all go through seasons. We partake in the cycles, rhythms, and patterns of our own lives, and of the world around us. Some seasons, like those marked by the weather or the calendar year, are easy to recognize; we await their coming (or their ending) each year. Others, such as periods of mourning and healing, are much more unpredictable in their arrival and departure. To grow, we must recognize what we have learned from the past and embrace the seasons as they come to us.

To begin this exploration, Bishop Geoff gives his reflections on September as the unofficial start to the new church year. He notes the importance of different "beginnings" in our lives, and especially how new beginnings as a church community allow us to share and grow with one another.

And as we grow, we must go through change. Iain Luke, Prolocutor of the Ecclesiastical Province of the Northern Lights, explains what an ecclesiastical province is, and how changing the name of this ecclesiastical province better represents the land and the people which it contains.

Jane Barter then examines the effects of radical hope as they took shape in the form of campus protests. Ecclesiastes 3:8 says, "there is a time of war, and a time of peace." Barter reminds us that war and peace, like many other things, are features of the human experience. She notes that wars such as the one ongoing in the Holy Land

are a reality of life, but that does not mean they are divinely sanctioned. Those who are less directly affected by war, such as those participating in campus protests, use their freedom to stand in solidarity with those who have no alternative.

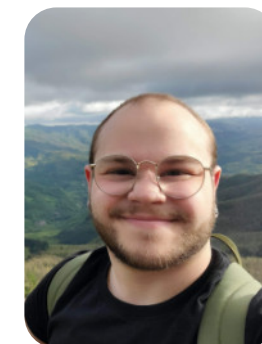
With the rising and falling of names and wars, Durell Desmond invites us to pause and reflect on the four seasons and what they can tell us about our lives. By taking the time to think about the seasons, we are reminded that we, too, are God's creation.

Edmund Laldin then tells us how there is "a time to break down, and a time to build up" (Ecclesiastes 3:3). By exploring the roots of Christian Nationalism, he encourages us to remember that the roots of our faith — and the actions which come from them — lie in the Gospel.

For many, September signifies a time to learn as there is a mass return to school. Ryan Turnbull writes about what is going on at St John's College, and he explains how engaging with theology is much more accessible than we are often led to believe.

Lastly, Misha gives her final contribution to Rupert's Land News with a Parish Profile of St. Paul's Middlechurch.

Peace be with you; I hope you enjoy.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert's Land News

September, the Unofficial Official Start to the New Church Year

People, generally, like to measure stuff. We would prefer universal measuring systems and standards, but this rarely seems to happen. Different groups measure the beginning of the year in different ways. The Church marks the beginning of the year with the season of Advent, the calendar year begins with New Year's Eve, and those involved in the business world mark their beginnings with the start of the fiscal year. All are important dates intended to offer human communities hope. In our local and Canadian context September, at least the day after Labour Day, is a great, unofficial new beginning. For the work world, it is typically a time of increased productivity. The government sees a return to legislative process, whilst society generally yearns for clear routines in social patterns, school, shopping, extra-curricular activities and appointments.

The Church also recognizes the importance and variety in the 'beginnings' of our lives and routines. This is evident in the observation of beginnings at poignant moments in God's salvific history like Advent and Easter morning, but often leans toward local secular customs, rituals and norms, which are often the motivational forces behind Church decision-making and activity. Generally, the Church uses September to begin the Church year and mission. We consider the summer slow months for finances, attendance at divine worship, communication strategy and especially Christian/discipleship education, just like the wider community. We accept the fact that a minimum of 8 Sundays worth of lectionary teaching goes unheard (some of the best preaching material runs continuously from Trinity Sunday through Labour Day). We also accept the fact that for most parishes, parish leadership hits the ground running at terrifying speeds preparing for the new hopeful beginning at the beginning of September.

Perhaps God speaks to us through wider community to help disciples plan for the New Beginning long hoped for. As the Church gears-up for this September, I remind you of the preparations being made for you in this diocese.

Our Discipleship Developer, Dr. Ryan Turnbull, continues meeting with disciples across this diocese, engaging in real and practical ways the Body of Christ must function in our local iteration. He is part of a team from our diocese and the Diocese of Brandon that invited the Archbishop of York to speak with us on Sept 28 at St John's College. This event will draw people whom Ryan has been developing, and hopefully you, to hear the gifted and prominent Discipleship Developer, the Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell.

In July, Ryan orchestrated a 3-day intensive discipleship study which 15 of your brothers and sisters engaged in. He also organized a summer retreat at a wilderness camp for young adults of the diocese to share their faith journey and develop as disciples of Jesus.

There are parishes engaging in the Blessing of the Backpacks. Through July and August disciples feverishly gather school supplies, food resources, and special items for comfort and fill NEW backpacks. At a ceremony shortly before Labour Day the gifts are blessed and dedicated in regular Sunday worship, and then distributed within the wider community. The disciples of these parishes know their wider community and their wider community knows them.

These are only a few development pieces happening in our midst, there are many more. Now is an amazing time to share between parishes the developments in which you are currently engaged.

To me, these developments and our sharing of them are some of the most important conversations the Church has as we begin anew.



GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Bishop of Rupert's Land

From Rupert's Land to Northern Lights: A New Name for Canadian Anglicans

Photo: Robyn Smith

This photo of the Northern Lights was taken in Kenora in 2023.

What is an ecclesiastical province?

In the Anglican Church worldwide, local church communities (parishes) are clustered together in a grouping called a diocese, under the oversight of a bishop. A cluster of dioceses is known as a province. This creates opportunities for mutual support and accountability between the dioceses and their bishops. In Canada, there are currently four such provinces.

The origins of the Province of Rupert's Land lie in the creation of the first diocese in the Canadian Northwest, in 1849. The bishop of this diocese was based in Winnipeg, but was responsible for the development and leadership of church missions in a vast area, covering the Prairies, the far north, and the areas around Hudson's Bay. The diocese took its name, Rupert's Land, from the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company, by which King Charles II directed the Company to trade in, colonize, and exercise control over the entire drainage basin of the Bay. The area became known as "Rupert's Land" after Prince Rupert of the Rhine, Charles's cousin and the first Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company continued to exercise jurisdiction in the region until the newly-formed Dominion of Canada purchased the land in 1870.

Subsequently, as missions and settlements became established in this territory, the original Diocese of Rupert's Land was divided into a number of new dioceses, but the whole area retained its identity as the Province of Rupert's Land. As of 2024, there are ten dioceses in the Province: Athabasca, Edmonton and Calgary in the civil province of Alberta; Saskatchewan, Saskatoon and Qu'Appelle in the civil province of Saskatchewan; Brandon and Rupert's Land in Manitoba; the Arctic, covering the whole of the

Northwest Territories and Nunavut as well as the Nunavik region in northern Quebec; and the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, stretching across northwestern Ontario and northeastern Manitoba.

Why change the name?

When the HBC charter was conferred in 1670, as the Canadian Encyclopedia puts it, "almost no thought was given to the sovereignty of the many Indigenous peoples that had lived there..." This began to change in the era of the numbered treaties, when the new nation of Canada entered into agreements with the First Nations who held its western lands. History has exposed deep flaws in the treaty-making process, but it stands at least as an initial recognition of Indigenous title and control over the lands in question.

This process of change has continued through to the 21st century, when the Anglican Church and the nation of Canada have begun to recognize, in formal apologies and in practical commitments, that the lands of Indigenous people belong to them, both in the economic and in the spiritual sense. This is borne out, for example, in the largest and most recent land claims settlement in the region, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement of 1993, which laid the basis for the Government of Canada to recognize the self-governance and economic rights of the Inuit, and led to the creation of the territory of Nunavut.

As a result of these developments, it no longer made sense for the church to refer to its provincial jurisdiction as "Rupert's" land. Even as a historic marker, this name undercut the inherent rights of Indigenous people to be acknowledged in their own lands, as well as the church's commitment to be an active partner in the work of healing and reconciliation.

How was the decision made?

Once the question of changing the name was put on the table by the leadership of the Province, the first consultation took place with the Indigenous bishops serving in the member dioceses. The goal of this consultation was to determine whether Indigenous leaders, bishops and elders, could affirm the change of name as a suitable and timely goal. With their consent, the idea was brought to the Provincial Synod, meeting at Prince Albert in 2022.

As the bishops, clergy and lay delegates discussed the idea, it became clear that there was a widespread consensus in favour of changing the name, in order to reflect the Province's contemporary commitment to being a place where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans come together for mutual support and encouragement. This commitment was evident at the meeting itself, which took place shortly after the rediscovery of unmarked graves at residential schools, first in Kamloops then elsewhere.

Synod received a time of teaching from an elder, about Indigenous practices of grieving. The guest of honour was the Archbishop of Canterbury, fresh from visiting the nearby James Smith Cree Nation where he offered an apology for the mother Church of England's involvement in the system of residential schools. The Anglican Council of Indigenous People presented a report on the developing reality of a self-governing Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada. And Indigenous leadership was visible among the synod delegates, many of whom came from dioceses which were majority or almost completely Indigenous in their membership.

All these aspects of the synod helped to develop a sense that the time was right to move towards a new name. While a change of name can sometimes be seen as a token gesture, the experience of this synod meeting suggested that it would be symbolic of something more substantial.

How was "Northern Lights" chosen?

As discussion progressed in 2022, the greatest energy centred around a name which would connect to the Northern Lights. There were a number of reasons for this focus:

1) While it was important to tie the new name to the land, the diversity of landscapes across the Province made it impossible to identify a single geographic feature which would unite us;

2) Yet the sky is something we all have in common, and the phenomenon of the Northern Lights is something distinct to our region, since the lights are regularly visible all over the Province;

3) The Northern Lights have spiritual significance in the many Indigenous cultures across the Province, being treated with great respect and regarded as "dancing spirits" or as a sign of the continuing presence of those who came before us;

4) Light is a central image in the Christian story, as well, symbolizing the creating and redeeming work of God as well as the call to disciples to be light to the world; so it was noted that the people of the Province are called to be the "northern lights" in this sense.

There were several possible names relating to the Northern Lights which were put forward for consideration. The 2022 Synod asked dioceses to consider the range of possibilities and be ready to make a decision when Provincial Synod reconvened in Calgary in 2024. At that meeting, several options were considered, and Synod as a whole accepted the name "Province of the Northern Lights." This will be the operating name of the Province for now, and will become the legal name once the necessary legal steps are taken, including a further vote in 2027.



IAIN LUKE

Iain Luke is the prolocutor of the Ecclesiastical Province of the Northern Lights.

There is No Riot Here: On Campus Protests and Radical Hope

JANE BARTER

Photo: [Joris Voeten](#)

A version of this article was first published in the "God Here and Now" blog from the [Center for Barth Studies](#).

Today, I helped pack my daughter's bags for camping. Like countless times before, there was a long list of needed items—both for her and to share with fellow campers: sunscreen, rain gear, water bottles, flashlights, craft supplies, paints, paintbrushes, Bristol board, etc. Together, we dusted off her childhood craft supplies long abandoned in some dark corner of our basement. But this camping expedition was different. She is twenty-three now, but I am still anxious. The goal of her trip is not happiness; although I am sure there will be happy moments. And whereas I worried before about things like homesickness and wood ticks, my worries today are more profound and serious.

Not long ago, at another Canadian campus, the University of Calgary, police officers used shield, batons, and flashbang explosives to forcibly remove a peaceful encampment of pro-Palestinian student protestors. As the state forces closed in on them, the students began to chant,

"Why are you in riot gear? There is no riot here." Such scenes have been played out in campuses across the world against students whose only crime was protesting the incessant killing of Palestinian civilians.

Scenes such as these represent a showdown between two very different powers: one of militarized force; the other of persistent hope amid and despite such force. It is a hope that shows the armed police forces with their various powers of intimidation to be naught. For the power of hundreds of young people singing in solidarity with the most powerless and dispossessed people of the world display how all the riot gear, the carpet bombing, the missile strikes, the targeted blockades—are grimly unnecessary, inappropriate, and counterproductive. *There is no riot here*: there are only students who echo in their tents and tarps a population who has lived all their lives under the terror of militarism and precarity, a population most have never met, but for whom these students are willing to risk their comfort, their futures, and their safety.

Photo: [Cole Keister](#)

While we in North America look far and we look long in the church for signs of sacramental life—of a life pointing beyond itself, of a life poured out for others—these students are willing to take up courageous action for the sake of the neighbour. *There is no riot here*: there is, in fact, its opposite—the breaking of bread, the singing of songs, the reading of poetry, and the creation of art. Despite the world which we have left them, young people persist in creating spaces of hospitality and creative and determined solidarity, in acts both miraculous and gratuitous.

One is tempted here to evoke Karl Barth's secular parable—those signs that God “may well have set up in both the outer and inner darkness which Christianity has overlooked in an unjustifiable excess of scepticism, to the detriment of itself and its cause.” I would go further: like many of Jesus' parables themselves, these scenes speak about not just the Kingdom breaking forth in the most unlikely of places, but also just how far off the “faithful” are from its disclosure (Luke 10:2–37; Luke 18:9–14). The faithful overlook such signs not just to their detriment but to their very peril.

The kingdom of God comes not as a riot, and it is certainly not dressed in riot gear. It is heard in the voices

of shared prayer and song in Hebrew, Arabic, Anishinaabe, and Cree, and all the languages of those gathered. The Kingdom of God is known in the breaking of matzoh and taboon and bannock in makeshift camp kitchens. Its words are written in marker and painted on Bristol board that these youth “will study war no more” (Isaiah 2:4). *There is no riot here*. There is only hope.



JANE BARTER

Jane Barter is a professor in the Department of Religion and Culture at the University of Winnipeg. She is also a priest in the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Barter has published extensively in the area of political theology. She is editor of the Christology volume of the T & T Clark Encyclopaedia of Christian Theology (forthcoming) and author of *Theopolitics* and the *Era of the Witness* (Routledge Press, forthcoming).

Seasons

Rise

Fall

Seasons

and

DURELL DESMOND

Photo: [Aaron Burden](#)Photo: [Ricardo Gomez Angel](#)

As summer ends and winter nears
 The trees, once vibrant, now hold bare
 From cooling winds and chilling air
 The crimson leaves, fallen, listless with a frozen stare
 The dying flame now dim, yet stayed
 Its resilience shone forth for all display
 As the evanescent flicker draws forth its last breath
 The fallen leaves must come to meet their fateful deaths

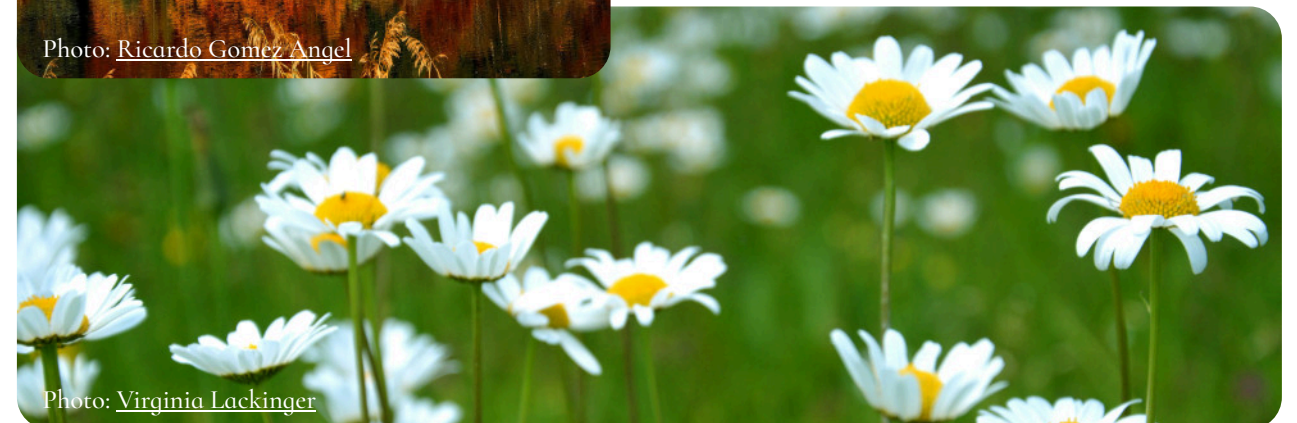
Photo: [Virginia Lackinger](#)

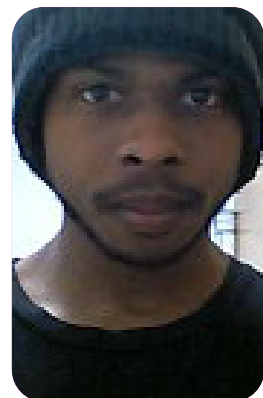
Photo: [Chase Emmons](#)

As winter subsides and spring comes forth
The withered tree blooms at the sight of coming warmth
The fallen leaves, not forgotten, but revered
Spread nourishment so that fresh leaves may reappear

From out of the ashes, green leaves are reborn
Wings sprout for which the tree adorn
To rise and soar, new heights abound
Until the time they come back aground

At autumn end and winter anew
The four seasons must again ensue
The dormant tree, now still and asleep
Anxiously waiting for new seeds to reap

Each year the cycle of four seasons pass
To mark our growth come winter last
We set our sights on new ambitions held dear
In hope of a blessed and fruitful year!

**DURELL DESMOND**

Raven Rite (Dr. Durell S. Desmond) is an amateur poet without a background in the arts. During his time working as an environmental scientist, he whimsically wrote poetry focusing on the themes of nature, humanity, spirituality, and family.

A Time to Come Together, A Time to Build

EDMUND LALDIN

Photo: [Sophie](#)

The Anti-Racism Black Anglican Network hosted its first conference at St. John's College from August 14 to 17. The conference was a success and had presentations that were both informative and challenging. All the presenters were well prepared, and I was privileged to speak alongside them. There were experts in a variety of subjects who brought their personal experiences and struggles to submit their positions and dreams for an equal and just society. The highlight was the interaction between the participants and the presenters. One of the conversations centred around the rise of populism and ultra-right movements worldwide. We spoke about the recent elections in different countries, the election campaign in the United States, and the apparent Christian Nationalism.

It should be noted that one must not confuse Christianity and evangelism with Christian Nationalism. In my view, there is a difference between the pre-Constantine and post-Constantine churches. The pre-Constantine church was birthed on the day of Pentecost. Jesus' disciples, apostles, and the early church furthered the kingdom of God to the marginalised, the

oppressed, the outcasts, and the Gentiles. The missionary movements of various disciples and apostles critiqued the exclusivism of the existing cultures and spoke boldly about the equality of the body of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles give us an insight into the social conscience of the early church. We are told they kept a common purse and cared for the sick, orphans, widows and lonely. In short, the pre-Constantine church presented and worked for an equal and just society, and believed it to be the nature and precept of the kingdom of God. Our ancestors of faith extended Jesus' mission and ministry to realise God's kingdom.

The post-Constantine church was born on Constantine's conversion day to Christianity. Within an instant, the church morphed from people living and preaching the kingdom of God to the support of the monarch and the Roman Empire. This phenomenon abuses the faith for the nefarious gains of the elite while subjugating the masses through the misrepresentation of Jesus' teachings and ministry. The one who challenged and dared a person with no sin to cast the first stone was now preached as the creator of division between the sinner and saved, believer and non-believer, and Christian and non-Christan. This nationalism imposed divisive policies as Christian values, and the penal code was submitted as God's moral code. This deliberate and calculated manipulation legalised slavery and encouraged discrimination against divorced persons and members of the 2SLGBTQ community. Sadly, the church started to protect political ambitions instead of cultivating and nurturing a culture of inclusion and the kingdom of God.

But the Spirit did not cease to anoint God's people. Many have been blessed with the courage to reinvigorate the church and society by challenging these corrupt and immoral systems. Ms. Rosa Parks' denial to give up her seat on the Montgomery bus was a Pentecost moment. Archbishop Michael Peers' apology to the Indigenous people for the sin of 'trying to make Indigenous on Caucasian image' and the Residential school system was the Holy Spirit speaking through him. Bishop Michael Ingham's consent to authorise the blessing of same-sex couples in the Diocese of New Westminster was led by the Spirit.

Christian Nationalists, both within the Anglican Church

of Canada hierarchy and society at large, will bemoan these courageous actions and the leading of the spirit as evil and contrary to the will of God. Sadly, the hunger for power and desire to keep the Body of Christ divided has blinded their eyes and shut down their minds to accept these actions as an attempt to restore the so-called “children of the lesser God”. The illusions of grandeur about themselves prohibited them from seeing another manifestation of the Spirit. The civil rights movement, the restoration of Indigenous rights and autonomy, ordained ministry, and equal marriage for 2SLGBTQ are rooted in the courage, vision, and faithfulness to fight for an equal church and a just society.

At the 2012 Diocesan Synod, our Diocese of Rupert’s Land requested the bishop to authorise the blessing of civilly married same-sex couples and it passed with an overwhelming majority. The bishop consented and initiated a process to acknowledge and respect lay and clerics’ consciences and to live with a diverse theological position. A couple of years later, the diocese created an Urban Indigenous Ministry Coordinator to provide spiritual care and ministry to Indigenous persons. In 2020, an anti-black racism committee was formed to combat racism in our churches. Most recently, the MNO Synod and Diocese of Rupert’s Land formed a joint committee for 2SLGBTQ+ education, advocacy, and policy to provide a platform to advocate for queer, non-binary, and transgender members of our community.

The underlying theme of all the initiatives is to strive for an equal and just society and transform the church. These committees, hopefully, will represent and model themselves as a return to the pre-Constantinian church. Our struggle today is to re-establish the passion and vision of the early church and the disciples and to further the kingdom of God. Our challenge is to speak out against Christian Nationalism and its followers. One caveat for all those who are inspired and committed to an equal and just church is not to compete with one another. Instead, mutual respect and support for each other’s mandate will be a model of unity and equality. The title of this article is a call to come together to build new structures and to uphold and support all disciples in their journey with God. The Master said, “a time to break down and a time to build up” (Ecclesiastes 3:3 NRSV). Now is the time to come together to break down harmful ethos, theology, and structures to build the city of God.



Photo: James Wood



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 interests include Preaching, liturgy, and how to make church accessible to the marginalised.

Introducing the St John’s Theology Hub

RYAN TURNBULL

You may have noticed over the past year that there has been a resurgence in activity around theological education in the diocese and particularly at St John’s College. Back in 2016, the Synod accepted a report on the future of theological education in Rupert’s Land that made a number of sweeping recommendations on how ongoing theological education and formation for ministry would be undertaken in light of the many changing realities facing the Church today. Many of those recommendations have been implemented and others have become less relevant as time has gone on, but the overarching thrust of the report remains relevant - “to create a culture of theological education across the diocese.”

Theology sometimes gets a bad reputation as boring, overly abstract, or worse, an active barrier to just “being Christian.” I’m sure we can all think of examples where this has been only too true. But there is a theologian named Nicholas Healy who has pointed out that when we say “theology” we can actually mean one of three things. First, theology can simply be the normal, everyday activity of any Christian trying to make sense of their faith as they go about their lives. Second, theology can be the “official” theology of denominations or other institutions, like for instance the 39 Articles in our own Anglican tradition. Finally, theology can be a critical enterprise, usually undertaken by people called “theologians” that seeks to constructively mediate between revelation, “official theology,” and “ordinary theology.” The work of theology thus takes many shapes and is necessarily done by the whole people of God.

So, in the interest of creating a “culture of theological education” that seeks to include the whole Church, we’ve been working on something we’re calling the St John’s Theology Hub. St John’s College has long been the theological training

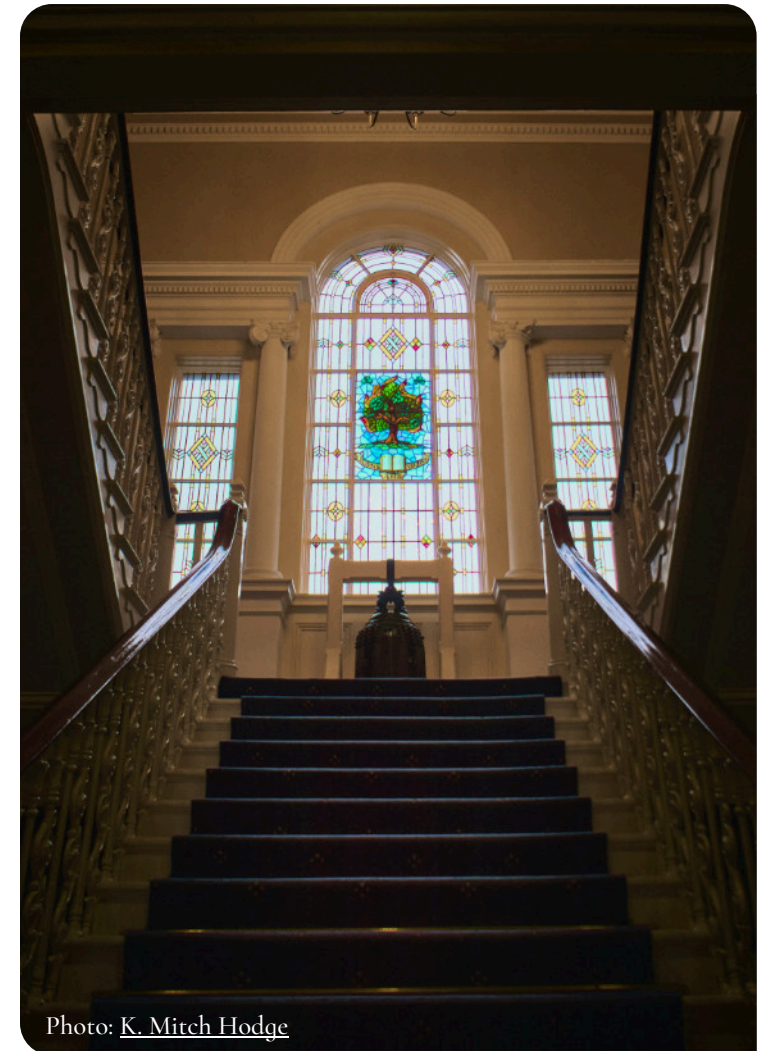


Photo: K. Mitch Hodge

institute for our diocese but has had limited theological programming since the close of the Faculty of Theology in 2011. But that is starting to change. This past year saw the return of the Wilmot Lecture with an exciting panel of local theologians on the topic of theologies of witness. The next Wilmot Lecture will be on October 7th and this time we are featuring Dr. Lisa Powell who will be giving a lecture entitled, “How can God be Disabled? A Trinitarian Response.” In preparation for Dr. Powell’s visit, we will be hosting an online book club on Friday afternoons. Beyond the Wilmot events we have hosted a number of workshops at the college and around the diocese on various pastoral concerns like Land Acknowledgments, suffering, and the practice of hospitality. If you missed the ones we’ve already done, don’t worry, there will be plenty more to come! We launched “Summit” a monthly hybrid event featuring discipleship discussions and special presentations from guest speakers. We’re really excited for our fall line-up so be sure to save the date and join us in-person at St John’s or online via the Zoom link.



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In addition to workshops and conferences, we're also very excited to announce that more formal theology classes are returning to St John's. This spring we offered a class on Ecotheology, and for the 2024-25 academic year will be offering classes on Indigenous and Christian Spirituality, Theologies of Place, Reading Christian Scripture, and a preaching class called "Proclamation and Method." You can find out more about each of these classes and register here. These classes aren't just for super-academic types. We are working with a new network called WECAN, the Western Education Collaborative Anglican Network, which is made up of dioceses and colleges from across Western Canada who are working to make theological education accessible to lay and ordained Christians at a very reasonable cost. Through our partnership in this network students can audit or take classes for credit

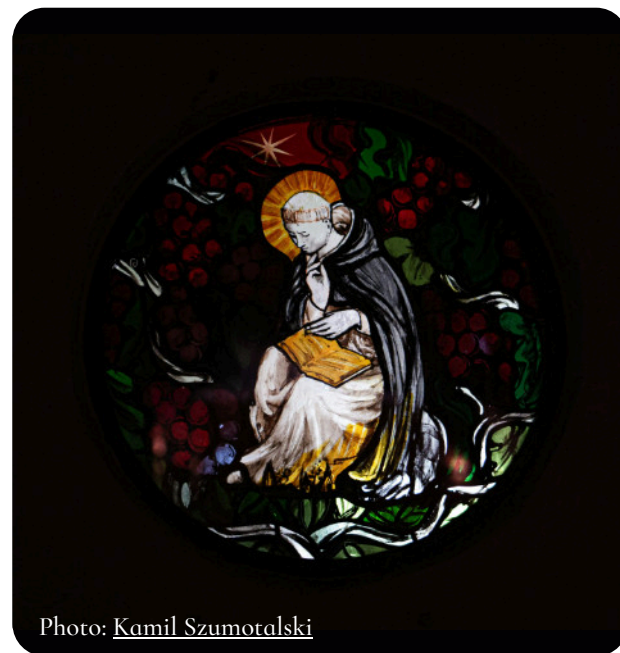


Photo: [Kamil Szumotalski](#)

toward a Licentiate in Theology (LTh) granted by Emmanuel St. Chad's in Saskatoon.

As the ad-men say, "that's not all!" for Rupert's Land is also thrilled to be working with the Diocese of Brandon to host a one day conference on Discipleship at St John's College on Saturday, September 28th featuring a visit from the Archbishop of York, the Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell. We're very excited about his visit and you can register to attend for merely the cost of lunch here!

The St John's Theology Hub, while based out of St John's College is designed to flexibly meet the needs of an ever-changing church. You can follow along with everything we're up to on Instagram @rupertsland_theology or reach out to discipleship@rupertsland.ca to enquire about a workshop just for your parish.



RYAN TURNBULL

Ryan is a farm-kid turned theologian, living in Winnipeg, MB. He is currently serving as the Discipleship Developer for the Diocese of Rupert's Land and is a Fellow at St John's College. When not obsessing over theological minutiae you can find him biking around town looking for a coffee or a little treat.



Parish Profile: St. Paul's (Middlechurch)

INTERVIEW WITH LYNDA WILKIE FROM ST. PAUL'S (MIDDLECHURCH)

Note: This Parish Profile has been edited to correct inaccuracies in the previous version.

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

Lynda: St. Paul's is between The Cathedral and St. Andrews, so it was always called the "middle church." This is the third building. The first one was washed out by flood and the second building became dilapidated, so a new one was built.

RLN: When was the first church built?

Lynda: The first church was built in 1825. We're excited to be coming up on our 200th anniversary in 2025. To mark the occasion, we will be having an anniversary service on January 26th presided over by the bishop. We hope former priests and parishioners will attend to help us mark the start of this special year. As part of our anniversary, we will be hosting a springtime Strawberry Tea as well as a Pork BBQ in the fall.

RLN: Could you tell me about the early forming of the church?

Lynda: The church was started by Red River settlers. Some came down from Hudson's Bay. And there were also Métis settlers here too. And at one time, there was an Indian Industrial School in this vicinity. The early St. Paul's had some of them come here.

RLN: How has it changed over the fifty years you've been going here?

Lynda: Quite a bit has changed. When I first joined the church, we had a wonderful choir. There were about eight to ten people in the choir, and three or four guys that were in it. And the church was full nearly every Sunday. It was busy and doing lots of things in the community. Recently some high-end townhomes have been built nearby, and some of their residents have started to come here.

RLN: Who all comes to St. Paul's (Middlechurch) now?

Lynda: We have a mix of ethnic groups. For a while, Madeline was kind of in charge of our choir. But with COVID, we had to give it up. So we haven't restarted. I don't know that we will, because there's really only maybe three people left from the choir that are still coming. We're very lucky to have Debbie Pansky and Jean Bailey as our Wardens and Allan Jacobs as our lay assistant. They have done a wonderful job of keeping St. Paul's going in tough times.

RLN: What does worship look like at your church?

Lynda: Well, it's changing. We have a new minister, Reverend James Gomez from India. We are grateful to be sharing him with the Church of the Ascension in Stonewall. He's a very nice person. We've gone through a lot of rectors over the years, and all different. Karen Laldin was our previous priest here. She was a big change,

too. But she knew how to do everything, and she took charge. She had us doing stuff we'd never done before, which was good.

RLN: What kind of relationship does your church have with the broader community of St. Paul's?

Lynda: We used to have a lot of events throughout the year. We had potluck suppers, a Christmas Tea, and we had a Strawberry Tea in the springtime that I mentioned before. We're excited to be doing the Strawberry Tea again for the 200th anniversary. This event was always looked after by a certain family from the area and their descendants. It started with the mother and then the daughters took it over and so on. It sort of followed on in that family. But then COVID-19 came, and everything got shut down. We really haven't gotten back to it. Our numbers are so low right now that it's hard to get anybody to take charge of that. But the 200th anniversary gives us the opportunity to start it up again!

RLN: What do you think is the biggest obstacle that your community is facing?

Lynda: I'd say getting the youth in. I think our congregation has dwindled because we've aged and aged out. So getting families involved and children involved is going to be the way through this. I do remember the days when the church was full. You had to come early to get a seat. It wasn't that long ago.

RLN: What are some of your hopes for your parish going forward?

Lynda: To increase the people that are coming and the children that are coming, that would be my hope for the future of St. Paul's. It's got such a history. It's always been part of the community here. There's one family that comes all the time, Sharon and Ed, and Sharon used to be the secretary over at the school. She knew all the kids. They would come to church and she would say "Oh, hi. How are you?" It was nice to see.

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

Lynda: I think we're very welcoming. I remember when I first started here, I had my son Clinton and my daughter Kim both baptized here. And I remember two people in particular were smiling and wanted me to keep coming. They got me into the choir and got the kids into Sunday

school. One of them was quite a personality. She was very friendly and laughing and easygoing. I remember her during one of the sermons, I forget who the rector was at the time, but she kept looking at her watch and she finally said, "Can we wrap this up? The football game starts in half an hour, and I'll be home to watch the football game." She loved the Blue Bombers.



RLN: What is something that you would like the rest of the diocese to know about your parish?

Lynda: Our main emphasis has been service to the Middlechurch Home across the street. Our cemetery has a section set aside for the Yazidi community as well as a place of final rest for those who have no family and are handled through the Medical Examiner. We see this as a large part of our service to the community. We are a friendly and accepting group and we would encourage people to visit us in our small parish. We have been a parish for almost 200 years and we are working towards continuing into the future.

