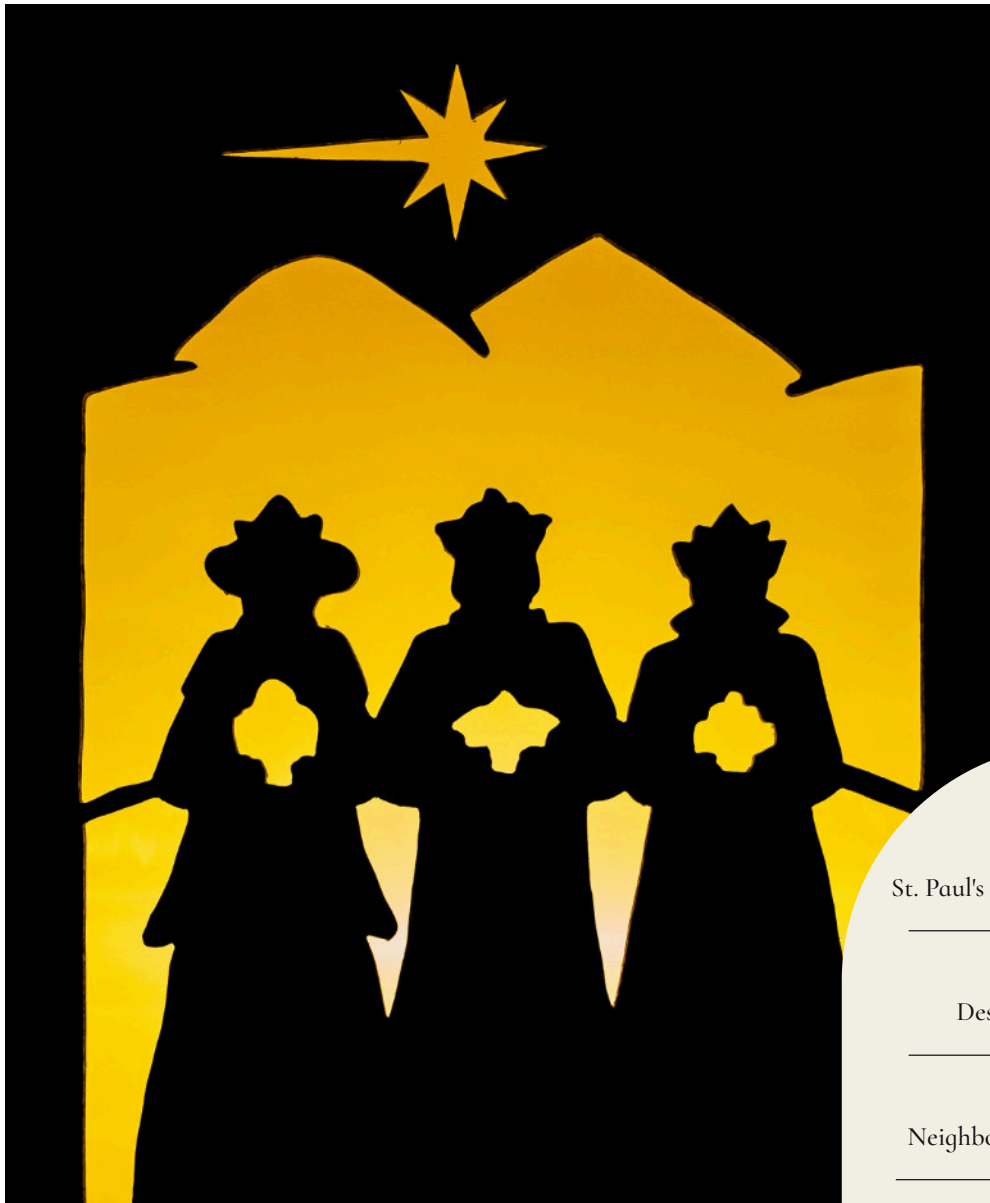


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THE WAY OF THE MAGI

Rupert's Land News is published 10 times per year (September - June) by the Diocese of Rupert's Land, in the Anglican Church in Canada. It connects churches and communities from Portage la Prairie, MB, to Atikokan, ON, by offering news, events, opinions, and ideas to 4,000 readers per month. RLN is available in a variety of formats: [Website](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Twitter](#)

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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: [Marcel Eberle](#)

The Way of the Magi

Photo: [Caleb Stokes](#)

“We have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2:2)

We know very little about the wise men who travelled afar to meet the infant Jesus. The only direct Biblical mention of them is in Matthew 2:1-12. Yet, we can reasonably infer that they studied the stars because they knew this particular one wasn't usually there, and that it was different than the other stars. There was something so special about it that they risked their lives to travel and meet the Messiah. Further, if we think about it, the story of the arrival of the Magi is quite odd. Though it is well known, if one had never heard of it before, it could seem quite disconnected. How on earth does a star correlate to the birth of a child?

One thing we can learn from the wise men is that sometimes (often, in fact), God reveals Himself in peculiar ways. For example, God reveals Himself to Moses as a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6), and He speaks through the mouth of a donkey to Balaam (Numbers 22:21-35). When one thinks of an omnipotent, omniscient God, one might not necessarily think of a bush, a donkey, a star, or a baby! Yet this is part of the glorious mystery of God — He will reveal Himself in exactly the right way, whether it makes sense to our minds or not. The wise men studied the stars, so God knew this was the best way to give them a sign. In following the way of the Magi, no matter what our gifts are or what we devote our time to, may we always be ready for

God to reveal Himself to us.

What I think we can all learn from the Magi is to study, listen, watch, learn, and to be humbled by the wondrous magnificence of all creation. What I think we can all learn from is that no matter what our calling is, God will be our guide. God is our Creator, our Advocate, and our Redeemer. He surpasses us and is beyond us, yet He is with us always. All He asks is that we seek Him; He will be there for us.

To begin this issue, two more people share their Bethlehem Moments, and one person shares a poetic reflection on what Bethlehem Moments mean for us going forward out of Christmastide.

Then, The Reverend James Gomez provides a brief history of St. Paul's (Middlechurch) in honour of their 200th anniversary.

Following this, The Right Reverend Donald Phillips challenges us all to think about how we talk about Jesus. Would each of us feel confident in our ability to describe Him and the meaning of His life and ministry?

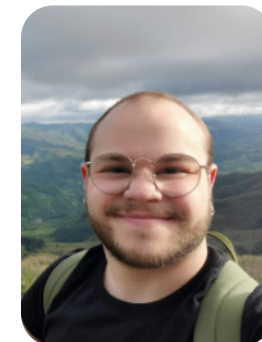
Karen Bender then shares a bit about Downtown Neighbourhood Lunch, Inc., a wonderful ministry operating out of Holy Trinity which gives food and essential items to those in need.

Next, Diane Guilford writes on the rejuvenation of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (AFP) —what it is, how it has been rejuvenated, and how you can become involved.

Then, Obren Amiesimaka writes on ringing in the new year, tackling hopes and fears, and what Christmastide can teach us about the meaning of trusting in the Lord.

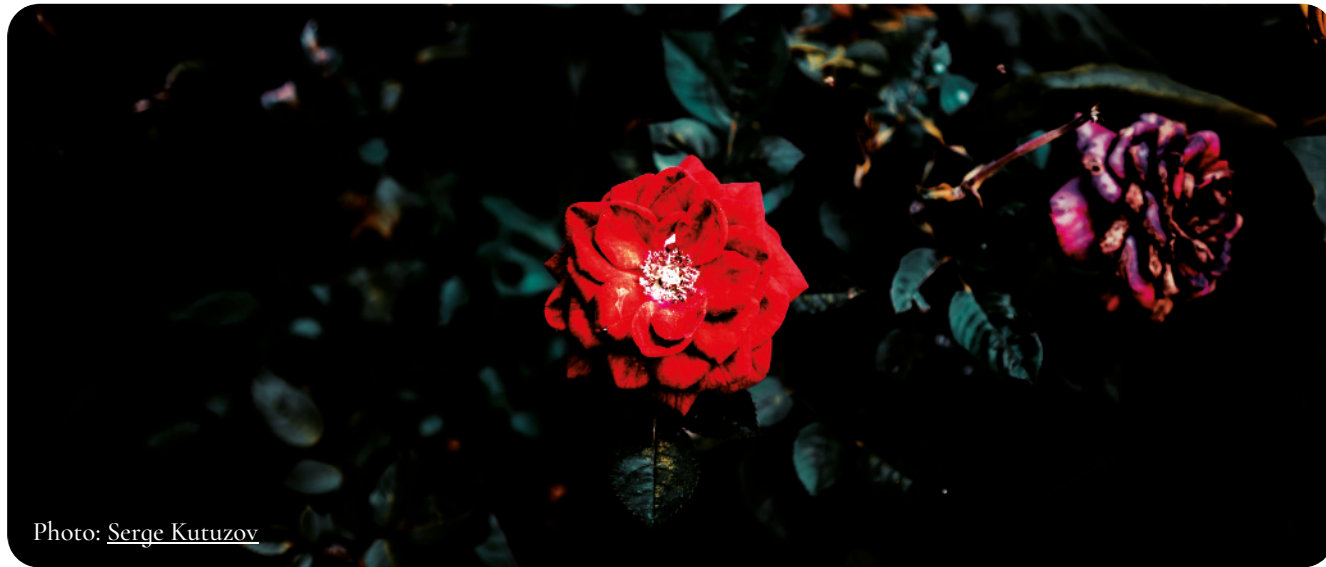
Lastly, Durell Desmond shares his poem titled “The Plan” to send us forth into 2025.

Peace be with you; I hope you enjoy.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert's Land News

Photo: [Serge Kutuzov](#)

My Bethlehem Moment started out much like Mary and Joseph's, with things not going well for them. There was no room in the inn, and the only accommodations were a stable with farm animals and a manger, and an actual food trough to rest the new-born baby Jesus — not exactly what you'd imagine for the Son of God.

My journey to Bethlehem was a downward health spiral over two months this past August to October 2024, which concluded in over 30 hours in the ER and finally some answers and some relief.

I was aware I had a weakening of my heart muscle due to chemotherapy in 2005, but things deteriorated significantly this year, which ended with severe symptoms which prompted me to go to the ER on October 19th.

I was told my heart was only pumping at 15-20% capacity, and I had accumulated water in my lungs, which is why I was finding breathing and sleeping very difficult. They put me on a water pill and medication to help my heart pump better and, referred me to a cardiologist and sent me home. Unfortunately, this was not enough, and I continued to accumulate fluid all over my body and ended up in the ER again two weeks later.

Finally, by God's grace in the form of an excellent ER doctor and new GP and Cardiologist, I was properly medicated and on the mend. This was the beginning of my Bethlehem Moment where I had an overwhelming experience of Jesus' presence, just as Mary and Joseph experienced in the midst of a stable with angels, shepherds,

and Magi celebrating His birth.

I am by no means back to normal and will likely never regain the full strength of my heart, but I have felt Jesus reassuring me He is with me and that "He will never leave me or forsake me."

I started to feel His assurance when I listened to the st. benedict's table livestream on the Sunday evening after my 1st ER visit. The opening song was the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." It felt like Jesus was speaking directly to me. And it's not often we sing traditional hymns at st. ben's.

The following Sunday, I went to the in-person service, and again, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" was sung! I hadn't been to an in-person service for some time and had been struggling with a dark night of the soul about going to church in general for most of 2024.

That Sunday, October 27th, I felt like I had a new birth as I entered the church. Jesus surrounded me and reminded me of why I come to st. ben's — the amazing people, musicians who compose unique and meaningful songs for the service, and welcoming communion table where we are welcomed back to the presence of God despite our failings.

I hadn't cried that much in a long time and felt renewed in my faith. I had an overwhelming feeling of Jesus' love for me.

- Jennifer Wiens

Photo: [Vince Fleming](#)

The time I met Jesus... at a rummage sale.

It was Sunday, the second day of the rummage sale, and it was just me and one other volunteer in the building. Not many people had stopped by in a little while.

A gentleman came to the church kitchen door and poked his head in to see if we were giving anything away, such as food. He shared that he lived outside and was in need.

I said it was not a day we were giving away food, but we were having a rummage sale. We invited him in and offered him a bag for some clothing and shoes. He inquired about some blankets and noticed a nice satchel that would help him on his travels.

We had a brief discussion about various religions and beliefs and how God keeps bringing him back. He shared some of his experience with the Buddha and the Holy Ghost, who he referred to as "Ghostie." He spoke like this was a very personal friend.

I wished him happy browsing and headed towards the kitchen. When I turned around, he had moved to the center of the room by the clothes tables with his back to me. His arms were raised high in the air, stretched wide.

Praying.

I stood back and watched. It was glorious. I couldn't hear what he was saying but I could feel it through my being. I just bowed my head and was present there with him. I don't know if he knew I was there as I was tucked away in the corner.

We just were.

When he finished, I went over to show him some of the blankets we had available. One had caught my eye earlier, but I wasn't sure it was what he would be looking for. It was

the most beautiful, and most heavy, burgundy and cream knitted Afghan. He said it was perfect.

He shared that blankets are his favorite things to don as clothing, which he asked me to help him put across his shoulders. Actually, he had to help me due to the weight. It was quite large, even folded in half diagonally. He crouched down a little so I was able to hoist it up onto his shoulders. It fit him like a ceremonial robe or cape. It suited him well.

He told me that he had to prepare for many days before he could refresh — that way he could reset for yet another many days. He shopped for a long time in that cloak, layered in its heaviness, in its gloriousness.

I don't know why it took until this point to clue in to the fact that we had a pantry I could access. If this person was looking for food, we could provide that. I offered to go find some while he selected items.

After I brought him some groceries and we packed up his wares, we walked together to the door and he saw a little tent on the way out. He asked if he could have it. Making no guarantees that all the pieces were there, I told him it was his. He let me know that the waitlist to get a tent was quite long so he was very excited to have found one.

He left us with a "God Bless" and went on his way. I stood there with a most profound feeling that I had just been in the presence of Jesus. While there was another person in the space the whole time, they had not at all seen or witnessed the magnificence that I just had. This was a special moment between the two of us.

And then it hit me. In that brief interaction, we clothed, fed, and sheltered this being.

Matthew 25 says,

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw You hungry and gave You food, or thirsty and gave You something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:37-38, 40)

[Christiaction](#)

Amen.

- Cassandra Golondrina

Photo: [Vince Fleming](#)

My Bethlehem Moment
Doesn't shoot from the sky
It's not a singular notion
It is the wings to truly fly

It's not a fork in the road
Where I suddenly know why
It's when I see Christ
From the corner of my eye

It's in a struggle I bear
Strife sent from above
It's in the praise I keep
It's when I choose love

Bethlehem Moments come
When I choose to keep going
When the horizon is home
And a long night is looming

Christ's light shines in all
Divine love pours out eternally
When we work as Christ to answer his call
The Holy Spirit breathes through us equally

Bethlehem Moments are here
When I see the Christ in you
When we set our gaze past fear
And you see the Christ in me too!

- Meredith Robinson

St. Paul's (Middlechurch): Celebrating 200 Years

REV. JAMES A. GOMEZ

The parish of St. Paul's (Middlechurch) will inaugurate the celebration of 200 years of its presence and witness on January 26th, 2025. Situated in the municipality of West St. Paul, this is a historic landmark for the church in the Diocese of Rupert's Land. It holds the distinction of being the second-oldest parish in this diocese.

Church structures have played a major part in the way we understand parish life. We can understand St. Paul's (Middlechurch) best by looking at its history. The parish was one of three that were established in what was known as the Image Plains (Red River Valley settlement). The other two were St. John's Cathedral (Upper Church) and St. Andrew's (Lower Church). Rev. David Jones is attributed as the founder priest of this parish. The church was opened for worship on January 30th, 1825. The church developed out of a building much smaller in size which was already operational in 1824. In its earliest records, it has been noted that there was a parochial school and a Sunday School attached to the church. However, the building was ravaged by the devastating floods of 1826. In its initial years, most of the communicants were Presbyterian. Rev. William Cockran succeeded his predecessor and continued to care for not only St. Paul's but also the parishes of St. John's, St. Andrew's, and St. Peter's. It was in 1844 that a new structure replaced the old flood-ravaged one. This structure had a chancel, a belfry, and a large gallery which housed the choir. The church faced the trial of a flood yet again in 1852. Perhaps the most pivotal moment was in 1853 when the church and graveyard were consecrated in the Anglican tradition. But it was in 1878 when the building got itself a new form, including an important addition when the Middlechurch Industrial School built a Lych gate for the church. The present structure originates from these developments, and the most recent work was completed as late as 1967.

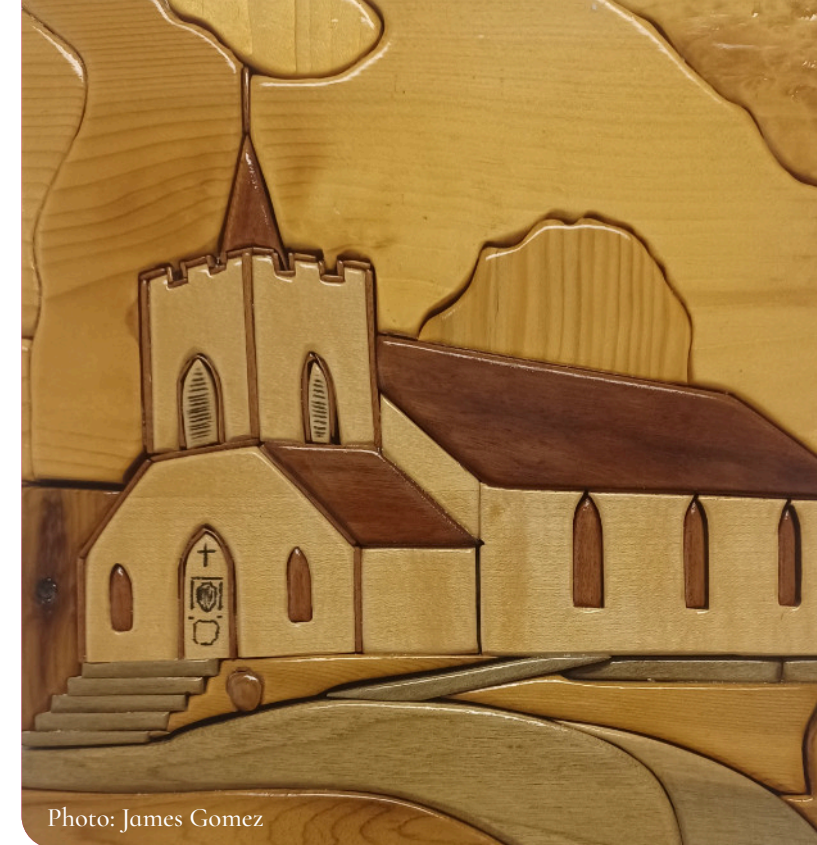


Photo: James Gomez

The buildings in which we worship are important, but we are only a Church because of our people. There is no greater joy than when someone from the parish grows to become not only its incumbent, but later on the Archbishop and Primate of Canada. From this parish, Samuel P. Matheson will be remembered for doing just that. The people who have formed the congregations, along with the clergy who have served this parish in different generations, have all contributed to the richness of the landscape, which is captured in the annals of this Diocese and, most importantly, in the land. Presently, even though small in composition, its people have shown a great degree of effort to take leadership in different respects to ensure the smooth functioning of the parish. We are blessed with our neighbours, the Parish of St. Teresa and the Middlechurch Home of Winnipeg, with whom we continually grow and collaborate to serve the broader community. The celebration of this landmark is to honour the generations of the past and carry forward the legacy into the future. The chief function of the church is to be the dispenser of the good news of Jesus Christ and the reign of God's kingdom. St. Paul's (Middlechurch) intends to continue in this endeavour wholeheartedly, not just for itself but for this world into which it has been commissioned.

For more information on our church and our 200th anniversary celebrations, check out our website at stpaulsmiddlechurch.com.

Photo: [Vaishakh pillai](#)

The Challenge: Effectively Describing Jesus Today

DONALD PHILLIPS

Most of us who participate regularly in worship are fairly good at conversing about Jesus Christ. We paraphrase pieces of a Creed, a Catechism, or share a meaningful prayer from one of our prayer books. However, increasingly, the people we rub shoulders with in contemporary living – at work, school, the supermarket, or our next door neighbours – have never heard about the Creed, a Catechism, a familiar prayer (to us) or even the story of Jesus in the Gospels! And yet, as disciples of Jesus Christ we should always be ready to give “an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15) – or at least be able to have an intelligent conversation about Jesus Christ with someone who inquires!

About 5 years into ministry as Bishop of Rupert’s Land, I became increasingly concerned about the fact that we were

not equipping our members to be able to offer this conversation, even as the need in an increasingly post-Christian culture was becoming more acute. While obviously knowing that I couldn’t solve the problem myself, I nonetheless decided to make a disciplined effort to understand the challenge more fully and to be able to propose at least a few ideas in response. Knowing that I needed a lot of guided learning and rigorous critique, I enrolled in the extension PhD program at Durham University, UK. Eight years later (not easy to complete while doing full-time episcopal ministry) I finished my dissertation and graduated with a PhD degree in Theology, a better understanding of the problem, and a possible response.

The fundamental challenge was developing a faithful way

to describe the person and work of Jesus Christ (a Christology) that was also intelligible to those with little or no background in, or knowledge of, the biblical story. I had to gain a good understanding of the (western) postmodern (or late modern) culture that we’re all currently immersed in. And part of that learning was coming to grips with the fact that all cultures are actually local expressions of living – very much dependent on place and time.

Christian faith understands it, without any pressure on the listener to adopt it? For help with this I turned to the late 20th century historical theologian, Hans Frei. (Yale University) In his work, he stripped away what he referred to as the “front-loading” of descriptive statements about Jesus Christ that introduced a subjective bias aimed at convincing the inquirer. Instead, he explored the Gospels to describe Jesus according to his words, his actions toward

Photo: [Cory Schadt](#)

The next challenge was to then develop a Christology that was faithful to our inherited tradition, but was also accessible and meaningful to the people in our local communities. Many of our traditional Christological statements require some familiarity with classical western philosophy as well as key portions of Scripture. And these statements are commonly couched in “apologetic” language – not meaning an ‘apology’, but rather a statement intended to convince the listener of its reasonableness with the hope of bringing them to accept the faith. But this could also be interpreted as being coercive. What about an honest description of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the

others, and his response to actions directed at him. The primary purpose of the Gospels was to describe the person and work of Jesus Christ to the listener (or reader) in such a way that they could “meet” the person of Jesus through the Gospel narratives if they were so inclined.

Keeping in mind what was important to members of our postmodern culture, descriptive statements about Jesus from the Gospel narratives could then be constructed that would be accessible and meaningful in understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ.

This is all well and good but then I was faced with the challenge of putting these statements into the minds and



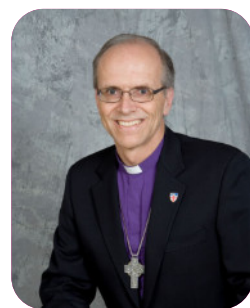
Photo: Cinna Baran

hearts of members of our congregations. Compiling them in a book is a start, but how many of our parishioners are likely to even see, let alone read such a text? However, as Anglicans, one of the things that most of us have in common is participation in a liturgical worship service each Sunday. And in many of our churches, this principal service is a celebration of the Eucharist. Most of our Eucharistic Prayers follow an ancient format known as West Antiochene. And this prayer structure has two significant sections that are intended to be narratives describing God and specifically describing Jesus Christ — including his death and resurrection. So using this structure and many of the pieces that are familiar in our Eucharistic worship, I constructed a new Eucharistic Prayer that incorporates the culturally-accessible descriptive statements about Jesus Christ into these narrative sections. The result is a prayer text that can be used frequently, and in which members of the congregation will continually hear statements that describe Jesus in an intelligible way whether or not the listener has much previous exposure to the Christian faith.

In the years that followed my doctoral work, I prepared a manuscript proposal which was accepted late in 2022 by the publisher, Rowman and Littlefield, centred in Maryland, USA. My book became available in hard cover

and in a Kindle edition in November, 2024. It is entitled *Developing a New Christology for a Postmodern Culture: Knowing Christ Today*. I was encouraged by the comments from the peer-review — “his work is insightful and valuable because it draws us to the core questions of what it is to believe in God. Moreover, it is a warning that failure to re-imagine and re-mythologize in each cultural situation is a failure of faith in the living God’s presence in the world.”

A book-launch is planned for Sunday, February 23rd at 2:00 pm at St. John’s College, 92 Dysart Road, Winnipeg. You are all invited even if you have no intention of purchasing a copy of the book. Feel free to come out, to learn a little about the work, and to enjoy a post-launch reception in the College Cloister.

**DONALD PHILLIPS**

The Right Reverend Donald Phillips, PhD served the Diocese of Rupert’s Land as bishop from 2000 to 2018. He has also served the Church in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and is a strong proponent of supporting the life and ministry of all. He and his spouse Nancy are delighted to have two sons and six grandchildren.

Neighbours Helping Neighbours

KAREN BENDER

Holy Trinity Church in Winnipeg has had a long tradition of serving the community outside the church. Downtown Winnipeg is a place where people work during the day and entertain themselves at night. But it is also a place where people experience poverty and the issues linked to it: homelessness, addiction, trauma, and mental illness.

The lunch program that has operated out of Holy Trinity, under various names, has served the community for many years under the guidance of Fr. Henry Falconer and Rev. Donald Mackenzie. Covid changed the ability of the church to continue running this program as in previous years. The latest change is the incorporation of the program as a distinct and separate entity known as Downtown Neighbourhood Lunch, Inc. This enables the program to apply for grants and donations otherwise unavailable to churches and to provide receipts for tax purposes. This also represents a switch to a secular organization reflecting our current culture and our attempt to do no further harm to Indigenous Survivors.

The focus of the program is not only to be a presence in our community, but also to provide hot lunch (hot dogs in summer, soup in winter), hygiene supplies, hats, gloves, scarves, shoes and socks as well as resources. We believe that even if we can only help in a small way, we are called to do the little we can do. Hospitality is the underlying principle of the program, and we work on establishing relationships with our guests. All are welcome regardless of mental state, sobriety, or any other factor. We do enforce a no-fighting rule and have a drop in visit by the Downtown Community Safety Patrol towards the end of the serving time to help us with the occasional guest who doesn’t want to leave or isn’t well.

We hope to involve some of the businesses in the downtown area as supporters and participants. Last month, at our

invitation, Premier Wab Kinew came to volunteer and see what we do. His presence, help, and ability to communicate in the language of most of our guests meant a great deal to them. It is part of our mandate to make them feel seen and heard. We hope to solicit dental organizations for toothbrushes and toothpaste and hotels for soaps and travel size shampoo. These items help our guests to maintain personal cleanliness which is a deeply desired situation. We also provide spaghetti and tuna in pop-top cans for ease of use. We also hope to draw in the support of other churches in our diocese who no longer have the ability to run a food program as St. Luke’s does. We are also looking for people to sit on our board, to provide donations of food, clothing, toiletries, and cash, and people willing to help prep, serve, and/or clean up.

Ours is a neighbourhood of deep, longstanding need. As food prices go up, the need goes up. We are happy to help in any way that we can. It is rewarding to form casual friendships with our guests. We are a diverse group comprised of Anglicans and community members working together with passion and caring. “For such as you do for the least of these, you do for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

**KAREN BENDER**

Karen attends Holy Trinity Church where she is a greeter and liaison to our neighbours downtown. She and co-directors Evelyn Fonzie and Taylor Campbell run the lunch program out of Holy Trinity’s kitchen and yard. She is passionate about serving all who need help of any kind.



Photo: Jeremias Ybancuz

The Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Rejuvenated

DIANE GUILFORD

On December 19, 2023, Heather Birtles lived out an adventure she always knew would happen, and she faced it with courage — perhaps even some excitement. Heather had been preparing for her death for a very long time — doing so was part of living out her faith. I have no doubt that those many moments in her life which felt like “a touch of heaven” are her new eternal life: singing in a choir, laughing with her husband, watching her grandchildren, or being in contemplative prayer.

Heather was an active member of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (AFP), and for many years she was our leader. We miss her dearly and we struggled with gathering again without her beautiful presence. We are grateful to St. Matthew’s Anglican Church for inviting the AFP to lead a prayer workshop for their prayer team and other members of the congregation and deanery. We were encouraged by people’s faithfulness to prayer, and it was such a gift to be in a group again, praying for people’s concerns and community issues. We were also inspired by one of their prayer team, Marilyn Boyd, asking if she might join AFP. She recalled how much her grandmother appreciated her time with the AFP.

The mandate of the AFP is encouraging Christians in their prayer life and providing resources and learning opportunities for congregations and individuals. When the AFP members talked after the prayer workshop at St. Matthew’s, we decided we had better get back at it — SO WE ARE BACK!!!!

We meet the second Tuesday of every second month at 10:00 am at St. George’s Anglican Church. We welcome anyone to come in the next few months to pray, or to come and receive help and encouragement in their personal prayer life or that of their congregation. A congregation has asked us to offer a short mid-week teaching before Lent on the ways of prayer and are in discussion about a possible prayer workshop in a deanery that would be open to the rest of the diocese.



Photo: [Jametlene Reskp](#)

We are a very small group of lay and clergy who do not have any special expertise or wisdom, but we believe in the power of prayer and the importance of strengthening our relationship with Jesus through constant communication. This often just involves listening. Please feel free to join us. Call Bill Oakley at (204) 224-5002 or Diane Guilford at (204) 823-3383 for more information.

By Diane Guilford on behalf of Linda Oakley, Bill Oakley, Eric Parsons, and Marilyn Boyd.



DIANE GUILFORD

Diane was ordained in 2003 and served at St. Margaret and St. Stephen Anglican Churches in Winnipeg and St. Thomas in Morden. Now retired, she lives in Morden, MB, and continues to be involved with the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer — a ministry she has been a part of for more than forty years.



The turn of the year, which generally overlaps with Christmastide (lasting from the dusk of Christmas Eve until the day before Epiphany), is a time of many festivities, activities, and emotions. During this festive season, it is the norm for people to travel and gather with family and friends, exchange gifts and goodwill, and attend cultural events and/or church services, including the many Christmas masses of the period. Beyond Christmas cheer, the New Year is often rung in with jollification and merrymaking, closing out the double-barrelled celebrations of the season.

As the new year unfolds, things begin to settle down: children return to school, adults to work, and business picks up steam again after the holiday downtime. At this point, if not earlier, people really start to give serious consideration to the new year that has just begun. The general ecstasy that envelops the season can sometimes give way to more sober reflection upon the past year — what one achieved or could not attain, hopes realized or dashed, and targets met, missed, or pushed further still. Plans for the new year typically compliment this with resolutions made, hopes elucidated, and ponderings of what might come to be in one’s personal life, in their communities, and in the world in general. What can be expected and what unforeseen events might arise?

Just looking at 2025, within the Church, we will have a change in leadership with both a new Bishop of Rupert’s Land and Archbishop of Canterbury to be enthroned. Nationally, federal elections loom, and in our neighbour to the south, Trump 2.0 dawns. These pose uncertainties, and arguably justifiable worry, about their impacts on society, our loved ones, and our lives individually.

Needless to say, this period of pause can bring mixed emotions of hope and anxiety, anticipation and fear, joy and sadness, and purpose and trepidation, amongst others. However, it is especially at a juncture such as this that we must trust in the Lord; but what does it mean to trust?

In lay terms, trust is “the assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). For me, trusting in God is to depend on His unfailing love to take care of me and my needs. Trust and faith are inextricably linked; trust is an expression of faith — “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). In trusting God, we rely on Him for all things, whether they be general or specific. Because we have faith that He can do what we hope for, we trust that He will, if it aligns with His will.

Scripture is replete with the message of trust in God, both in instruction and example.

Photo: [Jametlene Reskp](#)

As Proverbs 3: 5-6 says: “Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

Likewise, Isaiah 40:31 tells us, “But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”

By stepping out of the safety of the boat and on to the Sea of Galilee, St. Peter displays his trust in Jesus to keep him afloat in Matthew 14: 28-29: “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. However, he only began to sink when his doubt shook his faith and, hence, his trust. “But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” He said, “why did you doubt?”” (Matthew 14: 30-32).

In Genesis 12: 1-4, we see the example of the Call of Abram: “The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a

blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So, Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.” Here, Abram displays great trust in God by venturing out from where he had built his life — his homeland — and he even did so at a considerable age, not as a youth. He went with the utmost confidence that God would lead him to greater things, keep him from all the dangers that lurked in those dicey days, and fulfil His promises to him.

This passage speaks to me profoundly as I have now lived in five countries across four continents, and even more cities besides. Each time I have had to pack everything up, leave behind the familiar, and move my whole life to a completely new place — sometimes sight unseen — I have turned to Abraham placing his complete trust in God. I have also drawn strength from further passages including:

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

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We are reassured that if we trust in God, all will be well with us. Our trust in God can never be misplaced because He is always with us. This is the beauty of the message of Christmas when we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 1, we are given the genealogy of Christ and told how an Angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph telling him to proceed with his marriage to Mary, the Blessed Virgin, as, indeed, she was to bear the Christ child. In particular, Matthew 1:22-23 references Isaiah 7:14 in saying:

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

So, as we venture into the uncharted waters of the new year, its many uncertainties and precarities notwithstanding, let us set aside all worry and concern. Instead, let us go boldly, secure in the knowledge that our God is with us every step of the way. He is for us and not

against us. He loves us, is reliable, and has only good plans for us to give us a future and a hope.

I hope you had a most Merry Christmas and wish you and your loved ones a most blissful, wonderful, prosperous, and glorious 2025.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

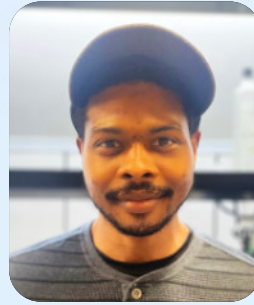
**OBREN AMIESIMAKA**

Dr. Amiesimaka declares that he is no theologian, but a lowly follower of Christ, striving to see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly, day by day. Obren lives trusting in God’s mercies and salvation bearing in mind Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.

The Plan

It is Your plan
And I will
Do what I can
On this journey, so
Please hold my hand
And be with me here
So that I may not fear

Please give me eyes to see
And ears to hear
By Your grace set me free
Increase my faith
And help me to believe
For You are my rock and redeemer, my sword and shield
My Help to fulfill Your will that's no longer concealed



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.