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RISE UP, MY LOVE

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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: [Mads Schmidt Rasmussen](#)

Rise Up, My Love

Photo: [MohammadHosein Mohebbi](#)

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη! Christus resurrexit! Christ is risen!

Lent brings much needed patience, perspective, and perseverance, and the events of Holy Week remind us of many of the most important stories in our Christian lives. But Easter is our faith; the Resurrection is our hope. As St. Paul writes, "...if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain."¹

Our whole faith and the entirety of our Christian beliefs rest on God's faithfulness and His promises. When God tells us that He will do something, He does it without fail. His word is the Truth. He foretold His death and resurrection several times to the disciples, yet I often wonder how they would have received this news. Did they think it was an allegory like one of the parables? Did they think similarly to Thomas, in an "I'll believe it when I see it" sense? Or did they truly believe Him?

We are told in John 20:19 that after Jesus' death, the disciples had locked themselves in a room because they were afraid of what might happen to them. Despite the fact that Jesus stated He would come again, they were still scared as they were without Jesus, the man, for the first time since His ministry began. Imagine what joy they must have felt to see His wounded body, raised from the dead, as He uttered the simple yet earth-shakingly powerful words, "Peace be with you." I can't help but feel there would be tears of joy, astonished glee, and most certainly, praises sent to God the Father.

May we all hear the cries of Easter joy reverberate across the ends of the earth as they fill our hearts with gratitude.

To begin this issue, the Right Reverend Rachael Parker, Bishop of Brandon, writes on her experience stepping into

the role of bishop. With just over one year of experience under her belt, she shares what she has learned about her ministry, and how her experience and knowledge can help us prepare for our future with a new bishop.

The Bible has a vast number of instances where God shows His love for His people. In the next article, Dr. Obren Amiesimaka tells us about many of these examples, especially in the story of Jonah. The message is clear: where there is love, God is there.

Following this, Dr. Ryan Turnbull, introduces the Anglican Poetics Project. He provides insights as to how poetry can help our individual faith, and the life of this Diocese. This project gives us an amazing opportunity to explore poetry with workshops, lectures, and retreats in this upcoming year.

Lastly, Ben Girgis shares how food is a way that we can imitate God's love. He tells us how he learned from his mother and the Bible that God feeds His people, and therefore we should feed one another. As many share Easter meals with family and friends, may we remember that God is the spiritual food that nourishes our souls.

Peace be with you, for truly, He is risen!



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert's Land News

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:14

A Bishop's Point of View

RACHAEL PARKER

Hello Rupert's Land Anglicans! Allow me to introduce myself. I am The Right Reverend Rachael Parker (aka "just call me Bishop Rachael") and I am the 8th Bishop of Brandon. As I write this article, I am 3 days away from the first anniversary of my consecration as bishop, so I truly am a "newbie" at this episcopal role. I also have the distinct privilege of serving on your Episcopal Search Committee as you make your faithful journey toward May 31st and prayerfully discerning who your next Bishop of the Diocese of Rupert's Land will be.

Your Search Committee is an excellent, committed, and very talented group of clergy and laity who have been working very hard to ensure the process of gathering at the end of May allows you the opportunity to walk with the Holy Spirit in electing the person who will live with you, pray with you, and serve with you for many years to come. The Search Committee has some extra folks attached to assist your local group. An advisory panel consisting of a lay person, a clergy, and a bishop from within the Ecclesiastical Province of The Northern Lights are assigned by the Metropolitan to provide "fresh eyes," outside advice, and extra hands to make the work lighter. I was given the privilege of becoming your Advisor Bishop. Thank you for the opportunity to serve and to learn!

As you continue in prayer and hope during this search process, I have been asked to share with you a bit of my perspective as a new bishop on the block. As I am brand spanking new, and as I am still learning new things every day, I trust that you will take what I share with an open heart and a willing mind. Bishops are just like you. We must learn as we work. We must pray always for discernment and humility and be open to asking lots of questions. Most importantly, we need to love and be loved by the people within our diocese. If your new bishop begins this way, and you respond in like manner, all shall be well. This need for mutual love and respect comes directly from our call to be followers of Jesus, which is at the heart of everything a bishop should be doing.

As a bishop elected "from away" and not having lived and worked within the Diocese of Brandon before, I found that I was truly learning everything from the beginning — new people, new places, new expectations. It has been a humbling year. Yet it has also been an exhilarating year. If someone were to ask me what the greatest gift of year one of "bishopsing" has been, I would immediately say it has been meeting the people. I have had the privilege of traveling from the southernmost parts of my diocese to the northernmost community (Churchill). I have led worship at several First

Photo: Pete McBride



Photo: David Bumgardner



Photo: [Enlightening Images](#)

Nations and have come to understand that while Anglicans eat well, our First Nations siblings know how to throw a feast! I have been invited into communities where I found myself crying and sharing the Kleenex box within minutes as stories of heartbreak in the Church – and sometimes because of the Church – have been generously shared with me. I have likewise had opportunities to laugh so hard with people that I thought I would never be able to breathe again. Being a bishop is an open invitation to become part

of a greater community, and intimately part of many smaller communities. It is an honour and a privilege I could never before have imagined. It has changed my life for the better and thanks be to God for that!

While I am blessed to have a strong, loving, and encouraging spouse who knows me well enough to bring me down when I get too high-falutin', and how to raise me up when I seem to be struggling, there are challenges that arise for new bishops as they begin this lifelong discovery of a

new way to serve Christ. For most of our Canadian dioceses, the Diocesan Bishop is the only bishop. While there are a few assisting or suffragan bishops out there, the reality is that bishops are the one and only of that particular Order within their diocese. We do have a healthy and helpful House of Bishops to learn from, but in the day-to-day working of episcopal life, there is a risk that we can become lone wolves. We need to be aware of this reality and own the gift that this can offer but we also need to intentionally develop relationships around us that we can lean on for support and then offer support to them as well.

I have an excellent group of clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of Brandon. My office staff is essentially only just a few people, but they are fabulous individuals who have worked hard to help me find my footing over the past year. I have come to lean on a few as they are intimately aware of those situations and people which need to be held in confidentiality for pastoral and practical reasons. The risk of having a small group of people close to the bishop is the perception that there is an “in crowd,” which implies that others are on the outside. To be quite frank, this is the reality of working as a bishop: part priest to the priests, part shepherd to the congregations and people, part administrator, part employer/boss. My advice to your new bishop and to all of you is to be aware and patient. The bishop will need to hold things in confidence, and they will also need support in the form of staff, archdeacons, chancellors, etc., who will form that “in group” — but it will not be for nefarious purposes! I promise.

Your new bishop should also be looking to form relationships with the people who are the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Every Sunday for a year I have come home from church and congregation visits saying, “I have the best job ever!” Those words don't come from every visit being a walk in the park. I have had many hard conversations, and my ear has been bent by lots of grumbling about “fair share” and perceived lack of support from the Diocese. However, every single one of these conversations in Parish Halls, coffee shops, and even Chicken Chefs, has given me the gift of listening to the hearts of God's people placed in my trust. Many of the conversations have made me laugh so hard I almost choke on my coffee. Several have had me reaching for my hankie. Some have had me frustrated with perceptions of the Office of Bishop, but it is these ones which challenge me to listen more deeply, pray more fervently, and grow in my role as Shepherd to all of them. It is in meeting with the people

where they are, in their own churches and communities, that I am realizing the importance of building relationships for the good of the Diocese and the good of their bishop.

The relationships a bishop must create and nurture must grow beyond that “inner circle” and the congregations within the diocese itself. Over the past year, collaborating with your own Bishop Geoff, Ryan Turnbull, other Rupert's Land folks, and members of the Lutheran MNO Synod, I am just beginning to appreciate the truth that we are all called to be followers of Jesus together. The Diocese of Brandon is intentionally trying to grow in relationship with your Diocese of Rupert's Land and the MNO Synod because these new relationships are lifegiving. It is in forming and nurturing these connections that I as a bishop find support, encouragement, mentors, inspiration, and most importantly, more people in whom to see Jesus. As you move toward the 31st of May and the beginning of a new and divinely inspired relationship with your new bishop, I encourage you to help them build relationships with you, with all your congregations, and with all your partners in ministry. Remember that relationship building is a two-way street. You can't expect your new bishop to do all the work while you sit back and “wait and see what they will do.” Nope, you need to bake those brownies, reach out to your new bishop, and honestly offer your assistance to them as they begin a whole new aspect of their vocation. If I have learned nothing else this past year of new episcopal ministry it is this: everything is about relationships. Relationships with Jesus, with His Church, with congregations, with individuals, and with myself as I continue to learn what it is to be bishop. Be patient. Pray ceaselessly. Be humble. Expect the same.



RACHAEL PARKER

The Right Reverend Rachael Parker was elected as the 8th Bishop of Brandon on November 25, 2023, and consecrated on March 18th, 2024, the Eve of St. Joseph. She holds a BA Honours in English Literature from Brescia University College and a Master of Divinity from Huron University College.

To Have God is to Have Love

OBREN AMIESKIMAKA

Easter is the fulcrum of the Christian calendar. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for our sins. He defeated death and resurrected on the third day that we, unworthy as we are, might have abundant life and be reconciled to the Father through Him. This is what we commemorate at Easter.

The purpose of Christ's coming was to die — not for dying's sake, but because of God's love for us. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

Through the millennia, theological arguments have raged about the Bible and its contents. Passages some consider controversial, slightly discrepant, and even mutually exclusive. People have debated over what the nature of God is, how best to describe Him, and what virtue best represents Him. Who God is in the Old Testament versus the New Testament, whether He is a magisterial king vs a kindly parent, or both, etc. etc. etc.

However, one idea which is hardly disagreed upon is that God is love. This is borne out throughout the Bible and is aptly exemplified by one of the most popular biblical stories, that of Jonah. God told Jonah "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."² It was enroute to Tarshish that the ship he boarded was engulfed by a storm until Jonah confessed that God had caused it because he was fleeing. Having asked that he be thrown overboard, a great fish swallowed him, and he remained therein for three days and nights. Upon being vomited onto the land after making his peace with God, Jonah then went to Nineveh to warn them of their impending destruction. They took heed and, from King to pauper, partook of a fast and acts of repentance causing God to forgive them and relent.

Jonah's reaction to this is so illuminating. "But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, 'Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and



Photo: [Tim Mossholder](#)

compassionate God, slow to anger and **abounding in love**, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."³ The chapter ends with God showing Jonah that He loves all people and never wishes their destruction, using the example of Jonah bemoaning the death of a plant God had caused to grow and provide him shade. "And the Lord said, 'You pity the plant, for which you did not labour, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?'"⁴

By and large, what people know about this story is that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. What is less known is

¹ John 3:16

² Jonah 1:2-3

³ Jonah 4:1-3

⁴ Jonah 4:10-11

why Jonah ignored God's directions in the first place. Simply put, it was because Jonah knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that **God is love**. Thus, even when His anger is amply justified, God's love remains a constant refuge.

As an aside, this is one of the biblical passages I find most humorous. I picture Jonah saying 'I knew it! You are so full of love; so, Your anger was going to dissipate the moment Your children cried to You. That was why I went on my merry way to Tarshish because I knew You were unlikely to go through with Your threat of destroying them. Now, is this not exactly what has happened?'

Ezekiel 18:23 encapsulates God's loving nature thus: "Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign LORD. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live." This is reiterated in 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting

anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." God is merciful because God is love.

To have God is to have love: "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."⁵ We as Christians must be love; we must show love; we must have love. Love must be manifest in our relations with one another for this is our instruction from Christ: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."⁶

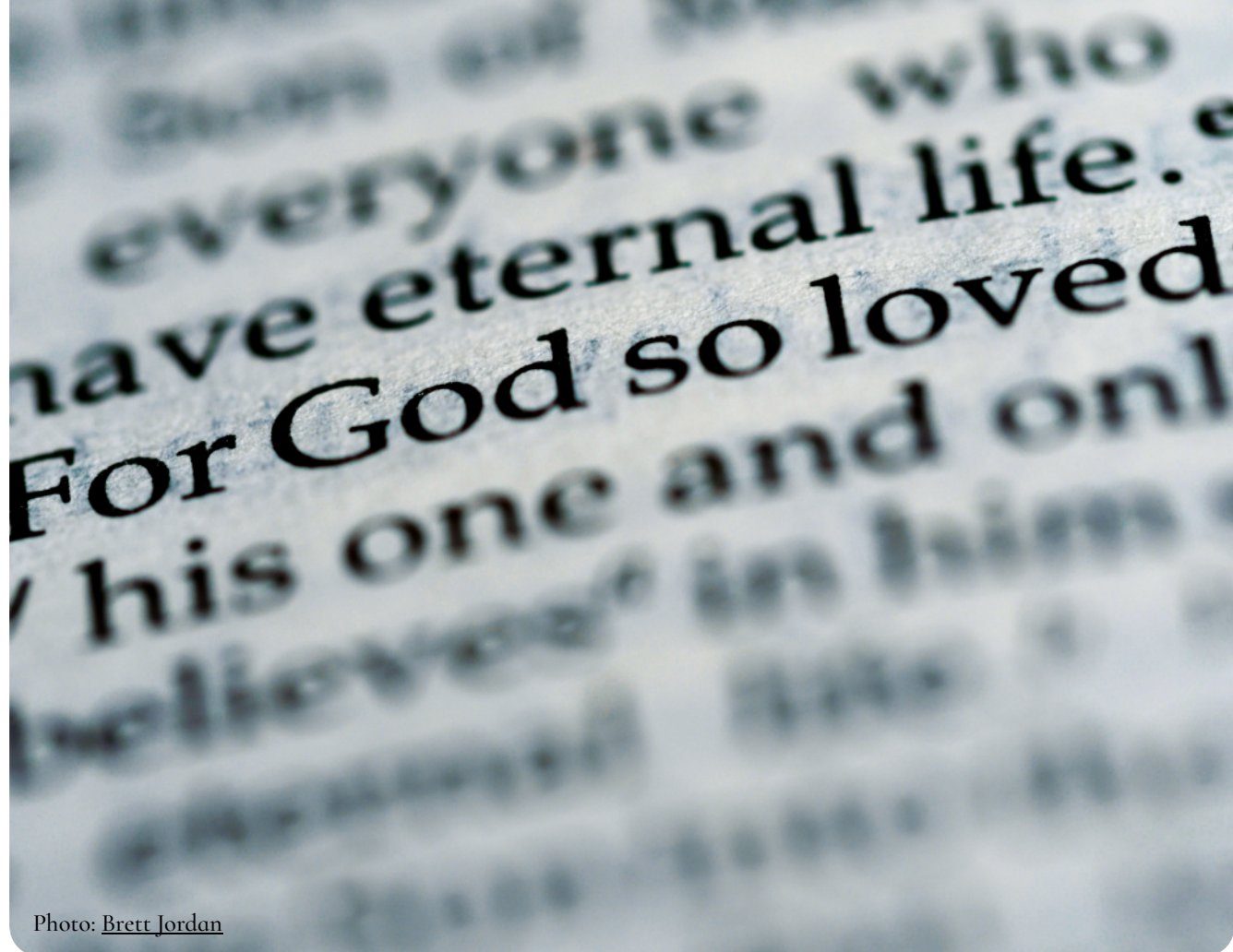
St. John the Evangelist does not mince words in saying: "We love because He first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not

⁵ 1 John 4:16

⁶ John 13:35



Photo: [Chinh Le Duc](#)

Photo: [Brett Jordan](#)

love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And He has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”⁷ This is why it baffles me no end that the evidently un-Christ-like rhetoric we hear, often from our neighbours to the south, finds support strongly amongst those who are loudest in announcing their ‘Christianity’.

The world is a big place with innumerable ideas and practices limited only by the imaginations of its over eight billion inhabitants. Having now lived in five countries across four continents, I have been blessed to have met a diversity of people from many more places spanning the breadth of the earth. I have thus encountered many ideas and situations which have required me to ‘test the spirits’. The way I have done this is by asking the simple question: ‘Is love there?’ I ask this because God is love and where love is, God is there - *ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 provides a beautifully instructive description of love: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour

⁷ 1 John 4:19-21

others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” So, when I notice that love is lacking, that is my sign to flee from all appearance of evil. This can be likened to a philosophical razor, and it has never failed me.

As we head into the bright Easter morning, may we have God within us, which is to have love in our hearts, and may His love spring forth in our love for one another.



OBREN AMIESKIMAKA

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”.

Photo: [MJS](#)

Introducing the Anglican Poetics Project

RYAN TURNBULL

The celebrated American poet Christian Wiman recently published a collection of poetry, memoir, and literary criticism entitled *Zero at the Bone: Fifty Entries Against Despair*. I started reading it on New Year’s Day this year, hoping against hope that something in there would keep the despair at bay, at least for a little while. On page sixteen, my eyes were suddenly transfixed by these few lines from his poem “Witness”:

“...I said I will not bow down again

to the numinous ruins.

I said I will not violate my silence with prayer.

I said *Lord, Lord*

In the speechless way of things

that bear years, and hard weather, and witness.”

The tension Wiman creates between wanting to remain in the safety of silence and his inability to stop speaking ultimately gives way to the discovery that right at the edge

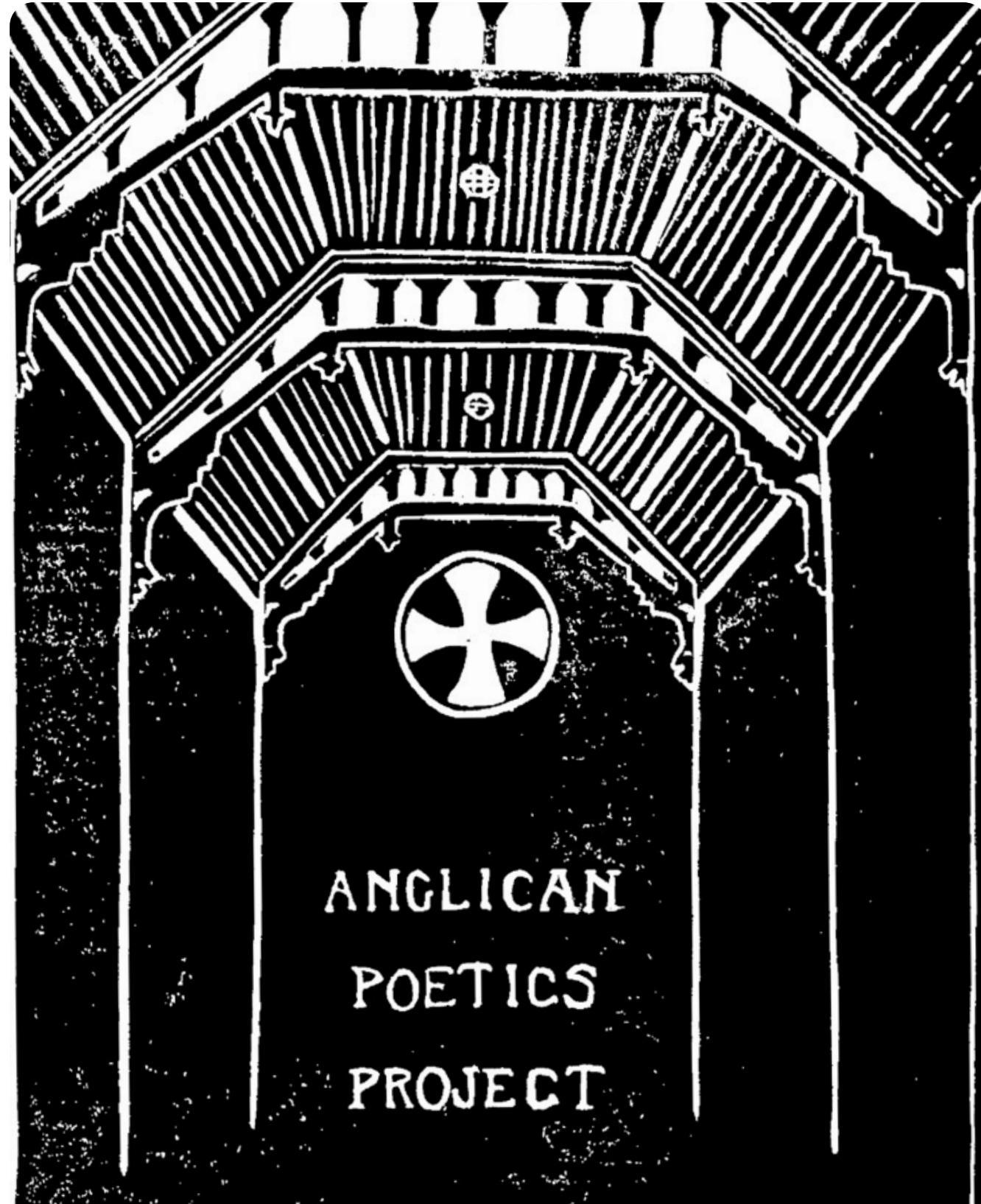
of both speech and silence, there is the One that bears years, and hard weather, and witness. I think our Church finds itself in a moment of exactly this kind of tension. We’re genuinely unsure whether to speak or remain silent, but our hearts are crying out, *Lord, Lord*, in that speechless way of things.

The gift of poetry is that it opens up space precisely where silence and speech collide. Poetry is not like ordinary language. Poetry struggles with the slipping and sliding of words until, through an act of profound making - what the Greeks called *poesis* - our attentions are focused and meaning is found, or perhaps just gestured toward, and we find some consolation for this journey that is life. The Anglican faith has a rich tradition of poetry — from the Psalms to the Prayer Book, from Herbert to Rossetti to Eliot, those who follow God in the way we are on have often found it necessary to resort to poetry over prose to even begin to find an adequate way of proceeding.

In 2025, the Diocese of Rupert’s Land is excited to share that it has been the recipient of a Calvin Vital Worship, Vital Preaching Grant. This Lilly-funded grant program provides funds to church groups to engage in year-long initiatives to inspire vitality in our worshipping life together. Our team’s proposal to explore the poetic sensibility of Anglicanism has been funded for this year, and we are excited to share a bit about the events coming to Rupert’s Land this year.

The goal of this grant is to reinvigorate the worshipping life of our diocese by resourcing parishes and leaders both academically and experientially with the best of the imaginative and poetic aspects of Anglicanism. In many of our parishes, worship is approached with care and creativity, and there is a real hunger to be constantly

Motif by Seika Dyck



learning and improving as worship leaders invite people into the beauty of holiness. This grant will help introduce more people to the poetic sensibility of Anglicanism, both in our liturgical life and in our theological tradition, offering an invocation for people's imaginations to be inspired in ancient and new ways.



Photo: [Europeana](#)

Poetry, as an exercise in expansive meaning discovery, creates for itself a lot of space for encounters with others. Local artist and St. Margaret's parishioner Seika Dyck has graciously created a striking visual motif for our project featuring the ark-like shape of a church's nave, evocative of the way the Church offers a place to be securely held. This nave ceiling extends down with lines of invitation into a sea of blank space, suggestive of the possibilities for invention, discovery, and unbounded encounter with others. All of this is anchored by a Canterbury cross, reminding us that it is Jesus that is at the centre of all our exploring, that we come to this project from a distinctively Anglican tradition, but that this tradition always sits somewhere between the received infrastructure of the past and the open possibility of the future.

So far, we have enjoyed an inter-religious poetry exchange at St John's College featuring food, poetry, and rituals from the Anglican and Sufi Muslim traditions. Local poet and saint benedict's table parishioner Angeline Schellenberg has guided us through two remarkable workshops on Lament

¹ Barrows, Anita. *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*. Translated by Joana Macy. Riverhead Books, NY, 2005, pp. 71.

during Lent. Moving into the spring, Beth Downey Sawatzky (another saint benedict's table parishioner) and I will be offering some workshops for lay-readers and lectors at St. Bart's (April 12th) and Christ Church, Selkirk (April 26th). In June, Kirsten Pinto-Gfroerer, Val Neufeld, and Melody Driedger will be hosting a poetic/contemplative retreat entitled *A Day of Recollection*. Space is limited, so register soon! This fall, for the more academically inclined, you can look forward to a public lecture series featuring local academics who specialize in various figures in the Anglican poetic tradition. We'll also be offering a class through St John's College on John Donne and his use of Scripture. For the poets, you can look forward to some more workshops on poetry writing, a possible poetry slam, and, most exciting of all, an all-day conference on November 1st with Steve Bell and Malcolm Guite.

To follow along on this journey through Anglican Poetics this year, be sure to keep an eye on the Diocesan events page. You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) or join our mailing list [here](#). All events associated with the Anglican Poetics Project will be marked with Seika's beautiful logo to help them stand out from our regular Diocesan programming.

We hear so often voices of doom from leaders, academics, statisticians and worriers that our Church is dying. But I think the poets offer us more vision. I leave you with these words from Rainer Maria Rilke:

You are not dead yet, it's not too late

to open your depths by plunging into them

and drink in the life

that reveals itself quietly there.



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.



The Holy Potluck

BEN GIRGIS

Photo: [Jacob McGowin](#)

The God of love, who we are experiencing now in this time of Easter, shares His love by providing food for the hungry and offering up the bread of life for us who desire it. One way that I have been shown this love is by being fed. Food plays an important role in my daily life and to share a meal with someone is more than just hospitable, it's Christlike. This idea stems from my childhood. My mother, serving as the deacon of food in our medium-sized church in Toronto, followed the foundation God set for us on how to love others. Her role was to plan both the coffee hour as well as organize the potlucks. Now, potlucks in the Christian tradition are an important part of the church community. They not only bring people together, but they unite a congregation. People are made equal, stomachs are full, and Christ is presented in action, inviting people to explore their faith outside of a secluded Bible study.

Food has always been this agent of love in all cultures. It transcends language and economical status and goes deep into the soul of a person. Food heals a hurt heart, invites strangers to become friends, and acts as a mediator during a time of tension. In the Scriptures, we see Christ using food

not only for sermon illustrations, but for meaningful transformations. From the Last Supper, where Jesus said the words, "this is my body broken for you,"¹ to the wedding at Cana, where Jesus transforms water into wine. One of the most well-known examples of Christ feeding His people is in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus feeds the five thousand. The disciples say to Jesus, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside to lodge and get provisions, for we are here in a deserted place."² Now, Jesus had been speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven the whole time the crowd was with Him, so why wouldn't he show them what the Kingdom of Heaven looks like? "And taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and blessed and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled, and what was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces."³

¹ 1 Cor. 11:23-26

² Luke 9:12

³ Luke 9:16-17

But if you had to ask me which my favourite is, it is 'The Parable of the Great Dinner' in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus says, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner, he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'come, for everything is ready now.' But they alike began to make excuses."⁴ "So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' And the slave said, 'sir, what you ordered has been

done, and there is still room.' Then the master said to the slave, 'go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.'"⁵ Jesus starts this parable with "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a

⁴ Luke 14:16-18

⁵ Luke 14:21-23



Photo: [Pushpari S](#)

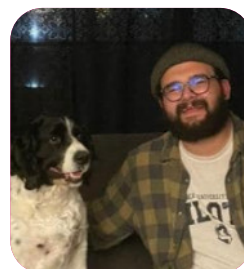


Photo: Pushparaj S

banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Our meals should be less about honour and glory for ourselves, but should be for those who are treated as though they have no honour and glory. They should be the ones we have sit at the heads of our tables and be served first.

With Christ, the potluck is plentiful, there is no barren place, and the wine is flowing out like water. We continue the Eucharistic meal into our time together, breaking bread as one and drinking the water of life together. Our potlucks should be as theological as our homilies; they should point to the God we worship as much as the hymns we sing. Those leaving our potlucks should be full and at rest and those coming in should be seen as equals. They should invite

people to experience the love of God through the people of God — a people that feed and a people who have been fed. My hope is that people will feed, take delight in one another’s company, and share the love of God. My hope has welcomed me to His Holy Potluck, expecting nothing of me but a hunger that longs to be filled. The love of God is found in the food we eat, the laughter we share at the table, and the delight in one another.



BEN GIRGIS

Ben Girgis lives with his spouse, Kaitlyn, in the city of Winnipeg. When he is not spending time with Kaitlyn, you can find him sitting at the back of the Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene on Sunday’s.

⁶ Luke 14:12-14