



rupert'slandnews

IDENTITY:
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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.

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Identity: Known and Loved

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“So, can you say a little bit about yourself?” This is question that I, personally, dread hearing, because I never quite know how to answer it. What context am I in when I receive this question? How much time do I have? How deep to I want to delve into my personhood? There are countless factors that influence our response, just as there are countless ways and words with which we could answer the question.

Many of us may talk first about our work and our families—the things that take up most of our time. We may elaborate on our personhood and our relationships. We might then go past these things and talk about hobbies, interests, goals, and what excites us.

Yet even these things, important as they are, do not ultimately answer the question of who we are. Jobs change. Families grow and change. Hobbies come and go. Goals are achieved and replaced by new ones. If our identity rests entirely upon these things, then our sense of self becomes as unstable as the circumstances around us.

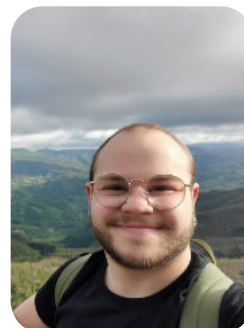
So, who are we, then? As all of our authors point to, our identity lies in Christ. We owe everything, all our goodness and personhood, to God. This is a worthy reminder; one that takes a posture of humility and gratitude. What’s important to remember about this is that this isn’t a loss of self—it’s a way to understand and become more fully ourselves. It’s a continual process of discovery.

Through prayer, lived experience, and a whole host of other things in our lives, we must continue to express an openness to God to understand ourselves. This is the way to learn what our true and good desires are, what our talents and gifts are, and who He has called us to be.

A man whom I greatly admired, the late Rev. Donald Roy Ross (1936-2024), has a plaque on a peaceful park bench dedicated to him which reads: “My wish is that you discover who you are.” In this spirit, I encourage you to take a quiet moment and open your heart to a continual discovery of who you already are, and who you are meant to become, in God.

In this issue, Rev. Andrew Colman begins by elaborating on how we are at our best when we allow the work of the Holy Spirit to shine forth in our lives, gifts, and talents. Then, Rev. Jamie Howison shares what he has learned in his almost 40 years as a priest, and now that he has retired, he reflects on how his experiences have changed throughout his life in full-time ministry. Next, Bishop Rachael Parker uses examples from her recent experience, as well as well known tales, to highlight how discerning God’s call and following it is the best way to lead our lives. Following this, Donna Royer shares parts of her journey of how her relationship with Christ has changed and developed over the years. Lastly, the Synod Committee has provided some important information regarding the upcoming 121st Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Rupert’s Land.

Peace be with you; I hope you enjoy this issue.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert’s Land News



Identity in the Spirit

ANDREW COLMAN

Photo: [Aurelius Wendelken](#)

There is a place we reach when we're doing the thing we're particularly good at; most of us have felt it. It's the moment when everything we know runs out, and yet something is still being asked of us.

A teacher or project manager midway through the plan when it all falls apart. The chaplain at the hospital bed with no idea what to do or say, if anything at all. The one at three in the morning, out of ideas, comforting someone who won't be settled. We come to the end of ourselves, yet there is still more to be done.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, whatever *it* is comes. The right words or the right silence, the gesture or flash of inspiration, the inclination to be patient and pray, the very thing that moment needed, shows up. Afterward, upon reflection, we think, "That was good. Better than I thought I had in me. Where did it come from?"

That something, or rather someone, has a name: the Holy Spirit. Now, it is tempting to think of the Holy Spirit as an occasional visitor, like a rush of wind at Pentecost, that feeling you get from a beautiful worship service, or after a really great Bible study conversation. While that may be true, it doesn't begin to do justice to the Spirit's work in our

lives because it is the Spirit who gives us the way forward when we are at the edge of our capacities.

While the Spirit meets us like this when we come to the end of ourselves, there is one place we perceive it more clearly than anywhere else: our gifts when we are really working within them.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, writes about the gifts of the Spirit to the church in Corinth. He runs through a list: wisdom and knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, tongues and their interpretation. There are more, of course, but in Corinth at that moment, those were the ones that mattered. The point he is making in the letter is that no one has all of them. The gifts your neighbour has been given are probably not the same as yours; that is good, because the Church needs them all across many bodies. Thus, we are each given particular things to do, and we all have our particular ways of doing them.

People often focus on this list which Paul provides, and it can be easy to gloss over how he concludes his message in verse 11: "All these are inspired/activated by one and the same Spirit."

In his book *The Sanctifier*, Archbishop of Mexico Luis Martínez offers an image of what this activation looks like. He writes, "Let us imagine a great artist creating a masterpiece. He arranges for the preparation of the canvas and the way in which the colours are to be combined. He then calls on his best pupils to share the work. He permits them to do the least important or least perfect part of it. But when he comes to the delicate finest parts where he will reveal his genius, where the inspiration will be crystallized, then the pupils put down their brushes and the master takes over."¹

If we think about how a painting is actually made, one does not begin with the light on the water or variations of green in the leaves. Nor do we start out with the more refined elements of our gifts.

One begins with big shapes: the horizon line, the clump of the trees on the left, the path the river takes through the field. That is the work of the pupils, good and real work. However, we, in our humanity, can only ever take it so far. The finest, most perfect touches are always those of the master.

A temptation in this moment is to treat that limitation as the gift running out or our own failure to be ready for the moment. But that limit is not the failing of the gift at all. Laying down those big shapes is what brings the painting to the point where the master's hand is required. The pupil who works to the edge of her skill has not fallen short; she has faithfully carried the work as far as it was hers to carry.

Jesus makes something like a promise about this. Warning his disciples what to expect when they are hauled before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, He tells them, "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; or the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."²

That may be the shape of the promise to the disciples in that moment, but it is certainly not always the way it works, and anyone who has lived very long knows it. The Spirit's work is not always the words we want or would have chosen.

¹ Luis Martinez, *The Sanctifier* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul Press, 1982), 120.

² Luke 12:11-12 (RSV).

Sometimes the thing to do is simply to stay, sit, and not speak but to pray in the silence of our hearts. Or sometimes it seems like the Spirit is not at work at all

When that happens—and it will happen—it's easy to pretend that the Spirit was not at work. Of that, too, we must be wary. There are seasons when nothing seems to be given that we can recognize as help, and we are left to keep working for what seems like no good reason at all. When that happens, we must remember that the Spirit is always at work in us, whether we feel it in any given moment or not.

There is something in all of this that warrants reflection. The whole image of the brush set down, the work leaving our hands, the Spirit taking over can sound less like a gift and more like a loss. The world, after all, teaches us to hold on to ourselves: our judgment, our agency, our right to author our own lives, successes and failures alike.



Photo: Pawel Czerwinski

The promise of the Spirit, however, seems to be implying that for the “really good stuff” to happen, we have to work to the point of our own failure and hand it off precisely so that someone else can get the glory.

But that handover is not a disappearance. The pupil does not vanish when the master takes the brush; the painting is still, in part, hers. We are not overwritten by the Spirit’s working through us; we are, in fact, most ourselves in the Spirit, in Christ, when that happens. It is in our giving over, not our holding on, that we embody in our identity as Christians—as ones who act by the will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the fullest sense. We empty ourselves so that Light of God may fill us and shine through us.

There is one more place where we must take some care. It’s easy to think that, like the painting, our gifts and our lives in Christ are brought slowly to *completion*. Going layer by layer, detail by detail, can make it sound as though we are working our way toward something we do not yet have, a salvation that still lies somewhere ahead of us. That is not the Gospel.

Fleming Rutledge, when speaking about being transformed by the work of God, puts it plainly. Our “right-making, or rectification, is not a process. It is already true in Christ... in the power of the Spirit, there is an ‘already’ quality about this proclamation... It really is quite true to say that the Gospel tells us, ‘Become what you already are.’”¹

That means that the painting is already finished and perfect in Christ. His refining of our gifts and lives is not a labour towards an earned salvation. It is the work of becoming more of who we already are—the good work of living into the identity that is already, in Christ, our own.

This is our identity in Christ, in the Spirit; The Master taking up the brush, working in and through us far more than we could ever have asked or imagined.

1. Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 555.



ANDREW COLMAN

Andrew is a priest in the Diocese of Rupert’s Land, ordained in 2023 after earning his Master of Divinity from Trinity College, Toronto. A Winnipeg-raised jazz trumpeter with a Bachelor of Music from the University of Manitoba, he’s known as the “swinging chaplain” and plays with the Super Cool Brass Band.



Photo: Wesley Tinney



The Gift of Learning

JAMIE HOWISON

Photo: [SOCIAL.CUT](#)

Now that I have retired from full-time ministry, I once again find myself in a place where I'm sure many of us have all been before: wondering what my identity is now that a large part of my life isn't the same as it was for quite a long time. In thinking about my priestly identity, I look at what's ahead of me and ask: what's new, what's different, and what am I now learning in this new stage of my life? To answer this, I must reflect on the different moments in my life which have led to where I am now.

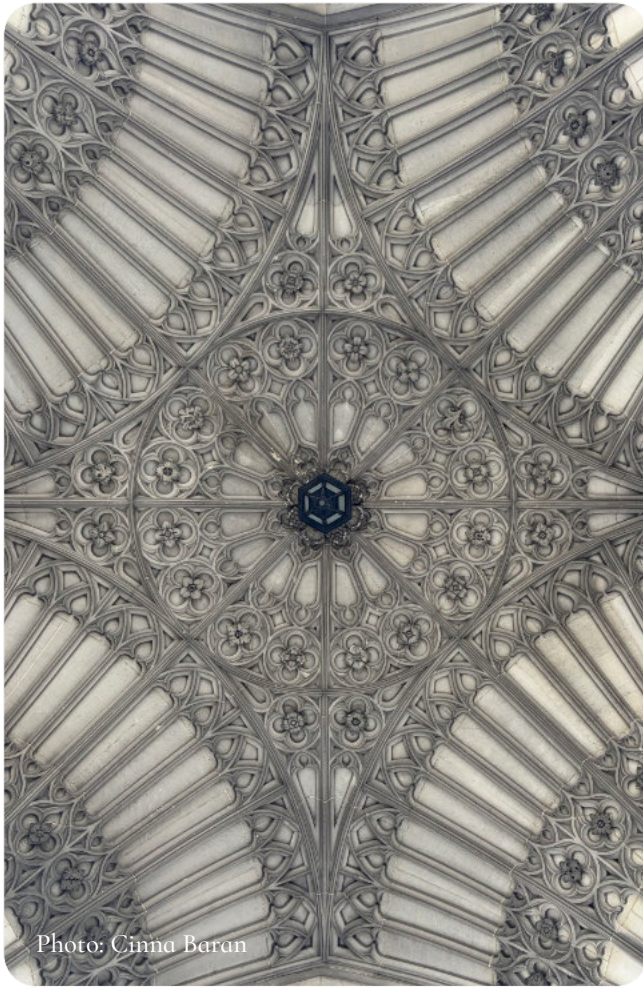
I'm pushing toward my 40th anniversary in ordained ministry, all of it served here within the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Ordained a deacon in 1987 upon my graduation from Trinity College, Toronto, and then priested the following year, I spent the first two years of ordained ministry at St. Paul's Church, Fort Garry, under the careful tutelage of Canon David Pate. I always thought that David's great skill in mentoring curates was that he would let you try things and flex your pastoral muscle right up to the moment at which you were going to tip off the ministerial cliff, at which point he'd tug on the rope you didn't even realize he had tied to your ankle, and say, "Uh... let's rethink that." It was a brilliant way to begin to sort out what it meant to be in ministry, which is entirely different from the kind of learning about ministry one does in theological college.

From St. Paul's I moved to Marymount, where I spent six years serving as the pastoral care worker in a setting I knew very well, having worked there as a front-line youth care worker for a couple of years prior to heading to Toronto for

my theological studies. This stretch at Marymount was followed by three years as the Chaplain and Dean of Residence at St. John's College, at the end of which I had lunch with David Pate to reflect on "next steps" in ministry. David was frank, saying that if I had any interest in parish ministry, I should make that move sooner rather than later, otherwise I might end up in institutional spiritual care for the remainder of my ministry. Not that this would be a bad thing, David insisted, but I might not want to close the door on parish ministry. And he was right.

Shortly thereafter, I submitted an application to the Parish of St. Bede, at that point in a shared building and shared worship agreement with St. Stephen's Lutheran Church. Over the next few years, we worked to merge the two into "The Church of St. Stephen and St. Bede," which caught the attention of both Anglican and Lutheran church leadership from across the country. My six years spent with that community were grand, yet a new idea had begun to simmer in my imagination; a dream, really, that would slowly crystalize to become saint benedict's table. Tag-lined as being "rooted in an ancient-future," saint benedict's table owed a huge debt to the thought of Robert Webber and to a set of innovative thinkers of the early 2000s who had begun exploring the idea of a new or "emergent" expression of church.

And yet for all that these new ideas enlivened me, I also knew that my formation and my foundational leanings were quite profoundly orthodox. I had, after all, studied under Fr.



Eugene Fairweather at Trinity College, spent two years worshipping and assisting in an Anglo-Catholic parish in my neighborhood in Toronto, and am now active in the Parish of St. Michael and All Angels. For all of the innovations that we developed at saint ben's, we were yet very much rooted in the great tradition and attentive to the power of orthodoxy.

And guess what? It was the right sort of improvisation for the day. As a mission parish of the diocese, we went from a gathering of twenty or so in our earliest days in 2003 to a robust community with an average attendance of a hundred and seventy in the months before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the years I was invited to speak in settings right across the Canadian Church, from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Victoria, British Columbia. People were excited to hear about this new church endeavour, and took some real comfort from the fact that we didn't have to toss out the tradition; that we were in fact drawing deeply on the great tradition, but in a new or renewing way.

And yet, and yet. In 2008 a video documentary called *One Size Fits All* was released, examining the stories of ten new and different expressions of church ministry from across the country. We were one of two Anglican ministries included in the project, which was a real honour for us. It was six or eight years later that I ran into one of the people who had been behind that video project, and he was eager to hear how we were doing. "It's good," I told him. "We have flourished, but in a way that has never overwhelmed us." He smiled and nodded, and then added, "You know, you are one of just three of those ministries from that film that still exists?" Oh. Wow. By the very grace of God, we have been doing something right. Lord have mercy.

Now, while we had grown to that average attendance of one hundred and seventy in 2019, Covid walloped us, as it did many communities across the country. And yes, through all of the Covid innovations into the days of reopening the church doors there remained a vibrancy to saint ben's such that even with numbers less than half of our old attendance in the first tentative days of gathering in those Covid years, we had a sense of possibility, of life, of vibrancy.

But in all honesty, those years had worn on me, in a way I couldn't quite explain. Things like vestry meetings—called the Kitchen Table in saint ben's parlance—had never been a struggle, but suddenly they were a huge burden to me. Some of the unique adult Christian education initiatives I'd coordinated for years had suddenly become more than I could even dream about. I was feeling that I was beginning to mark time, and that was something I didn't want to do; not at all.

At the same time, Bishop Geoff Woodcroft had approached me about giving some Sunday morning assistance to the parish of St. Michael and All Angels. "Three months" he had said to me, but it quickly became apparent that more time would be needed. In some respects, the request was simple. I was to go to celebrate the Eucharist and preach on two Sundays a month, while Fr. Brian Rountree would serve as priest-in-charge and cover the other liturgical responsibilities. The parish had hit a real low point—just twelve of us on the first Sunday I was there in July 2022—yet I knew that St. Michael's had a unique place in the Diocese, and so we needed to see if there might be a kind of renewal for the parish.



For my final year at saint benedict's table, I would spend those two Sunday mornings each month at St. Michael's, followed by leading the saint ben's evening liturgies. I found myself needing to learn so much in the life of that liturgy, as while I had preached at St. Michael's at least a dozen times over the years and celebrated the Eucharist twice, being a lead priest was something that ramped things up considerably. And now, close to four years later, I still need to turn to our organist for coaching on certain sections that I am to sing, and I have to think quite deliberately about each step of the liturgy.

But I have to say, I love being in that parish. All through the years I have loved each and every place in which I've been able to offer ministry, but there is something about being at St. Michael's that really touches a part of my soul that needed some tending. As I have said, with saint ben's I had these coast-to-coast speaking engagements—I was cast as an authority on the evolving church, and I suppose in that context I did fill that role—but where I am now is different. I'm learning. Again. I'm the relatively new guy. Again. And I'm digging into the parish history with a kind of abandon, having now volunteered to take on the role of parish archivist... and you should see the brilliantly organized archives that I have now adopted.

There's a joy, you see, in going back to a place of learning; almost a place of innocence, I suppose. I learn every week from the clergy with whom I serve—Archdeacon Lauren Schoeck, Fr. Nicholas Saulnier, and Fr. Brian Rountree—and I trust that I offer something to each of them. I have shifted from those twenty years at saint ben's in which I needed to know everything (a relative thing, to be sure!) into a space at St. Michael's where I am still allowed to learn.

And in retirement, isn't that a gift? Surely, yes. Amen and amen.



JAMIE HOWISON

Ordained in 1987, Jamie has spent the entirety of his ministry in Rupert's Land, and in retirement is serving as an Honorary Assistant at St. Michael and All Angels in Winnipeg. His published books include *A Kind of Solitude: How Pacing the Cage with an Icon and The Book of Common Prayer Restored My Soul*.

Before I Formed You

RACHAEL PARKER

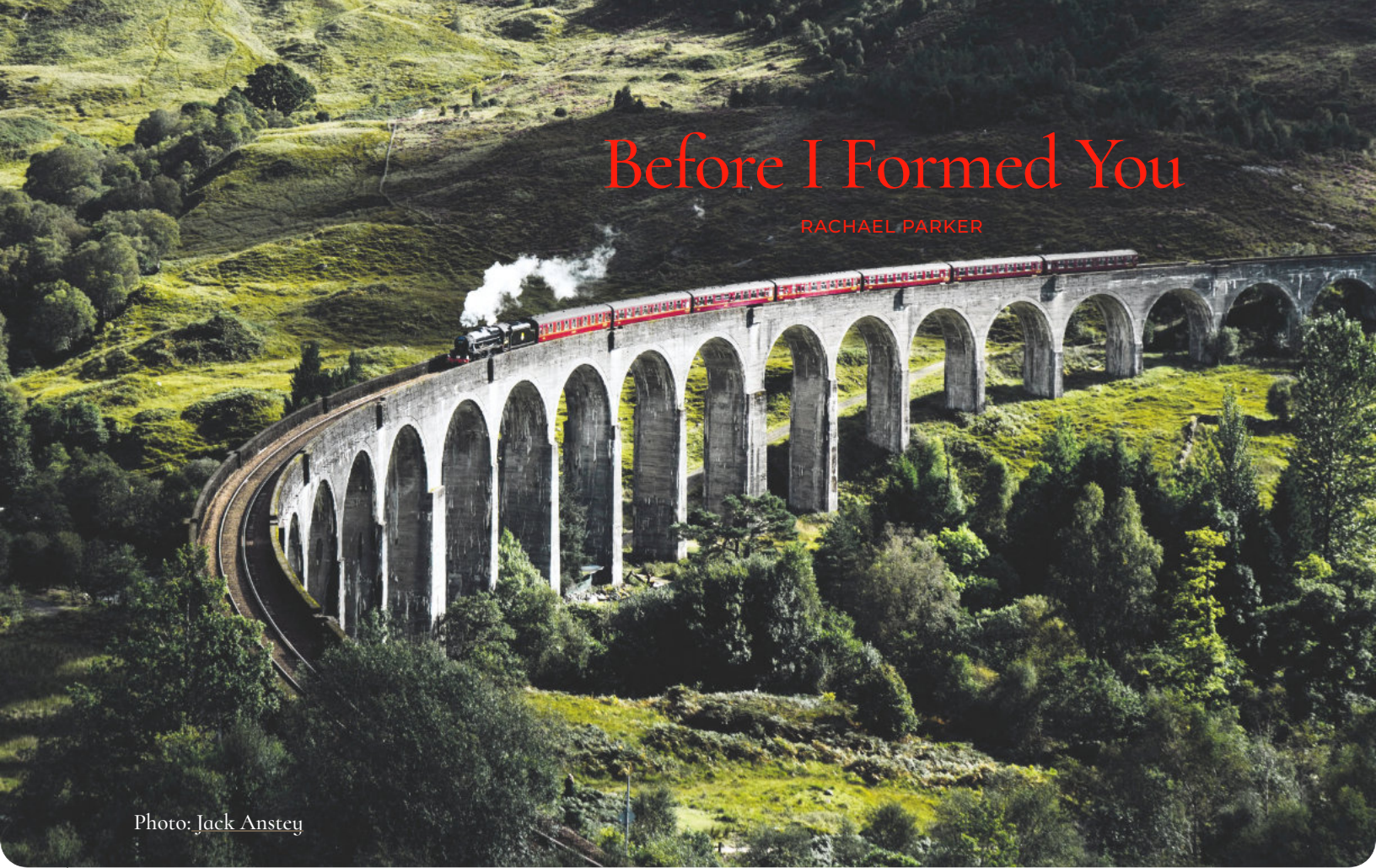


Photo: Jack Anstey

As I draft this article on the topic of “identity,” I am preparing for the ordination of a gentleman who was ordained a vocational deacon at 80 years old but whom we have discerned is indeed called to the order of priesthood at 86. I have also had no fewer than five conversations in the past few weeks with people who are recognizing a call on their lives in a new and exhilarating way. It seems that the Holy Spirit is moving like a spring wind through the Diocese of Brandon, and for that I am greatly pleased.

While my varied conversations have been as diverse as the people themselves, one common thread has woven them all together in my heart—identity. Each person has come to me with the desire and the very real need to dive deeper into the identity they feel they have been given by God. For some, this sense of who they are has always been a part of them. For others, it is an evolving and often surprising reality. For all it is a joyous, generous, exciting, and especially daunting journey they are beginning, as it should be.

In my role as bishop, I often feel like I have a dual identity in the lives of those who are discerning. It seems that I am both

the narrator and the reader of an exciting and heroic epic story being written in real time. I find myself remembering my first readings of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* and the *Philosopher’s Stone*. As a bishop, I have the privilege of seeing a seeker/discerner from a bird’s-eye view. I can anticipate what will happen next, and I am tempted to jump in and correct a path, help them to avoid a dangerous decision, or urge them to make a more difficult decision, but that is not my role. Instead, I am called to just walk alongside, celebrate or commiserate with them, granting them space and time to realize what God is leading them into.

I recognize that, like a narrator in a story, I do have a significant amount of influence on how the story might unfold, and yet, as much power as I might perceive I have, the truth is that God is the only One whose influence should truly be counted. Which leaves me the role of reader as I receive the unfolding story, not knowing what might happen, white-knuckling the parts I anticipate may not go well, and sitting forward in my seat as the story gets better and better. As I have the privilege of journeying beside those who are

seeking their own God-given identity, I find that I am learning my own alongside them as well. And I am learning that discernment is a lifelong path into the identity God created for us long before we even were!

Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.” There is no conceivable way to speak about our true identity without first understanding and acknowledging that God was the One who created and gave us that identity. We can wax poetic on the experiences, influences, people we have encountered, which have seemingly pushed us down the path we are following, but as Christians, we must first, last, and always credit God for beginning our journey and nudging us along the way.

Whether we can realize it yet, we are each called to be lifelong discerners, seeking out the identity that reverberates the truth that God planted within us before we were even formed in the womb. Every child of God is called. We are called to fulfil an adventure, much like Frodo or Harry Potter, one that only we can fulfil.

In our search for our own true calling, in seeking out the identity that feels like home, there are always times and circumstances that tempt us to hand over some of the work

to others. We might experience moments when we look at what is before us and cower at all that is to come. We may wish to skip the hard parts or delegate them to others who have more “natural ability” in that area.

So many times, I think back to Samwise Gamgee, Frodo’s companion in *The Lord of the Rings*, or Hermione and Ron from *Harry Potter*, and think of the numerous challenges when they volunteered to step in and do the deed, take the next hard step for Frodo or Harry. However, as with any true and relatable hero, both Frodo and Harry knew when it was their time to stand up and step out because the task at hand was for them to complete. Sure, there were plenty of situations in which Samwise, Hermione, or Ron got to step in and shine, but they were living into their own discernment and working out their own true paths when they did. They helped their unknowing hero friends choose when they had to move forward on their own, trusting they would have what they needed when they needed it.

Each one of us, as children of God, has our own moments when we are the proverbial Frodo or Harry. As we live into the knowledge that we were indeed chosen by God for a specific purpose before we were even a twinkle in our mother’s eye, we grow into our identity as seeker, discerner, listener for God’s direction. There are many times when the





Photo: Martino Pietropoli

next steps are easy and obvious. There are more times than we may wish, though, when we discover that seeking God's will and discerning what is next is not always easy or obvious. We may wish to just throw our lot in with the crowd that seems to walk the easy path, and yet we always seem to have a Samwise saying, "No, Master Frodo, I think not," or a Hermione and Ron reminding us that the cross drawn upon our foreheads in baptism is that indelible reminder that our course has already been created for us. We can try to walk away, but we will always, in the end, come back to the true path.

The conversations I referred to earlier happened to be about discerning a call toward ordination to the diaconate or the priesthood. However, they could just as easily have been about seeking God's wisdom for how God wants them to serve as teachers, parents, labourers, coaches, and on and on. When baptized Christians agree to begin the epic journey they are called by God to make, they, like Frodo and Harry, begin by simply beginning—taking one step and then another and another. They are seeking the identity God has carved out specifically and individually for them, which they will only discern and uncover as they live into the very identity they are seeking to understand.

In the passage from Jeremiah, God does not tell him that he will be better than anyone else. He doesn't tell him the ins and outs of how he is to live his call to be a prophet to the nations. God simply tells him, "Do not be afraid ... for I am with you to deliver you."¹ God's words to Jeremiah are so very much God's words to each and every one of us. We are not to be afraid, for fear will stop us from moving into God's plans for us. We are to trust that the identity God has envisioned for us will be our own and no one else's. We will grow into that God-given identity as we step out in faith, fulfilling the plans God has for us.

We may not become as famous and renowned as the Frodos and Harry Potters of the stories. Yet, we will be as successful at doing what we have been called to do, if we follow God's voice, discern God's will, and then step out with our own Samwise Gamgees and Hermiones and Rons at our sides to revel in the stories God is inviting us to write as we uncover or own identities.

1. Jeremiah 1:8.



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.



Photo: Brian Wangerheim

Dispatches from the Hermitage: Knowing Christ

DONNA ROYER

An assumption of Christian faith permeated central Canada during the 1960s and 70s when I was growing up. Shops and offices were closed on Sundays. Most people spent Sunday mornings at church—children sitting quietly in fear of ‘The Look’ should they disturb the adults. The Lord’s Prayer was recited each morning in school classrooms. The families I knew all said grace before meals and prayers with their children before lights out at night. Yet, only once do I remember getting a hint that faith might be more than these external trappings.

In my mind’s eye I can still see the details of that morning. The small, braided rug interrupted the bedroom’s hardwood floor gleaming in the early morning light. My gentle grandfather knelt beside the unmade bed with his head lowered, hands clasped, and arms resting on the mattress edge. I was awed by the scene I had stumbled upon. I had

never once imagined such an action might be part of his life. Nothing was said about it, but I knew he had been praying—silently, at home, alone. The memory of this quiet act of humility has inspired my spiritual journey as an adult.

As many do, I drifted away from the faith practices of my youth. As a young adult, parenting a toddler full-time and feeling frazzled, I returned to the church in search of community and a more grounded life. I encountered Christ in the Eucharist and Scripture. The people I met embodied a settled contentment which reminded me of my beloved grandfather. They helped me realize that the life of contentment and peace I had glimpsed years before could become my reality. But, to do that, I needed to develop a relationship with Christ that stretched beyond Sunday mornings—one based not only on the prayers said aloud with others but also ones silently whispered in private. It was the beginning of a life-long journey to deepen the most formative relationship of my life.

Addressing Christ directly, in private, felt awkward at first. I preferred to use the text set by the morning and evening prayers in the prayerbook. The liturgical structure was familiar, both from my childhood and the Eucharistic service the church was now using. The prewritten words made it feel



Photo: [Joseph Sharp](#)

safe. As my life circumstances changed, I began to feel these prayers were not conveying my heart in the way I wanted—thus began years of experimenting with a variety of prayer formats. For a long time, I dedicated the tasks of my day to Him as acts of love and prayer. Making dinner, doing laundry, or finding something for a colleague at work became ways of serving Christ in the practicalities of my day. Centering prayer, a practice for quieting the internal chatter to listen for Christ, was a weekly activity for some time. *Lectio Divina*—a form of praying with scripture—and journaling were my primary practices for a few decades. Regardless of the form my prayers took, the sense of Christ meeting me in them did not change. Discerning His gentle presence got easier and easier.

Now, decades later, I still meet Christ in the Eucharist, in Scripture, and in private prayer. While I used to fit my prayer life into the spaces around the other tasks of my days, now it is my life. It is an ongoing conversation.

These days my relationship with Christ flows from contemplation—simply being fully attentive to Christ's presence and

being with Him. My mornings begin by making a mug of tea and sitting quietly. I might watch the trees sway in the wind and listen to the magpies screeching. My knee catches my attention. It still aches slightly from being twisted last week. I notice my thoughts seem to cycle this morning around physical projects in the yard. Sometimes there is a sense of Christ nudging in response to my noticing, and sometimes there isn't. Tea done, the tasks of the day begin.

Our conversation continues, though. Whether it's the beauty of the woodgrain while wiping crumbs from the table, or ponderings about the microscopic universes forever changed by vacuuming up the dust bunnies—all is intentionally shared with Christ. In the evening, I again sit quietly with him, enjoying the slow shift towards night. I might look for the first star to appear overhead, or listen to the evening's performance by the frog symphony. As I settle in bed, I offer him heartfelt gratitude for the day we have shared.

My prayer life does not always feel this spacious. Like everyone, I experience times of darkness—times Christ suddenly seems absent from my life. I awake with the feeling the

hermitage, and me in it, have been abandoned. The quietude is not comforting on these days, but instead lonely. The peaceful routines that usually ground my days feel empty—yet paradoxically overflowing with a sense of pointlessness. On days like this I am generally drawn to witness the more challenging realities of life. I notice how feeling lonely stirs thoughts of being unwanted. I see the ugliness of litter in the ditches. The distant howl of the coyotes reminds me that some creature's life is being cut short. Yet, just as on the more pleasant days, it is the sharing of what I notice that matters for our conversation. When Christ feels absent, I simply offer my observations into the seeming nothingness. I accept the silence of His response, trusting in His caring presence, and long for the sense of darkness to lift.



Photo: [Andres Aleman](#)

When the feeling of Christ's absence lingers too long, doubts begin to settle in. I am tempted to abandon hope that He'll return. It is at times like this I rely upon the faith of others to help. The deepest loss of hope I've faced was during a time of unexpected transition. I had dreamed of ministering in Africa for years, but shortly after moving there, it became clear I needed to return to Canada immediately. While I continued to participate in the Eucharist upon my return, for weeks I had little faith that I would ever sense Christ's presence again. I felt abandoned and lost. Two things got me through. First, witnessing the faith of others around me in the liturgy encouraged me to continue to look for Christ there. Secondly, meeting friends for coffee or a meal helped me find Him in daily life again. They'd listen to me stumblingly tell my story as I tried to make sense of where I was, how I'd gotten here, and what might be next. Christ and faith were not overtly talked about. Advice was not offered. Their care in listening allowed me to eventually once again recognize Christ's presence and love at the tables we shared and my life.

My relationship with Christ has endured thanks to His love and commitment to be with us always. My part has been to trust, listen for Him, and stumblingly walk forward—even in the darkness. Like any relationship that lasts, it has changed over the years. It has become, I think, the relationship I glimpsed in my grandfather's bedroom so long ago. One, I like to believe, that he prayed for me to discover—enduring, nurtured in silence, and deeply personal.



DONNA ROYER

After decades of active ministry on behalf of, and within, the Church, Donna now lives a quieter, slower life as an intentional contemplative Solitaire. She spends her days on her rural Interlake acreage reading, creating textile art, taking photos, and wandering in the woods.

Synod 2026

The 121st Session of Synod of the
Diocese of Rupert's Land

Team Rupert's Land :
Courage, Connection, and Change

"Speaking truth in love, growing
together into Christ our head."
-(Eph 4:15)

Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM

At St. John's Cathedral (135 Anderson Ave.)

Friday, October 16 & Saturday, October 17, 2026

At the Masonic Memorial Centre (420 Corydon Ave.)



The Right Reverend Naboth Manzongo has called the 121st Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Rupert's Land to meet on **Thursday October 15, Friday October 16, and Saturday October 17, 2026**. The Opening Eucharist Service will be held in the Cathedral Church of St. John on Thursday evening. Subsequent sittings will be held at the Masonic Memorial Centre located at 420 Corydon Avenue (free parking available). Friday's and Saturday's sittings will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (times subject to change)

Our theme for the Synod is "**Team Rupert's Land—Courage, Connection and Change**." "Speaking truth in love, growing together into Christ our head." (Ephesians 4:15) This verse inspires hope and offers strength and resilience to all who trust in God.

Synod delegates, Lay and Clergy, are the people who will be participating and voting at the Synod. It is important for all the members of the Diocese of Rupert's Land to be informed on the importance of our biannual synod. Please note that the year end form "CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION OF CHURCH WARDENS AND LAY DELEGATES TO SYNOD for the Year 2026" must be returned to the diocesan office to indicate who are the elected lay delegates from your parish. If this form is delayed or not sent in, we do not know

who to send synod related material to.

As elected lay delegates the responsibilities are outlined in Canon 23 as found on the Diocesan website [HERE](#).

Written communication will be sent out to all delegates of Synod with:

- A list of eligible clergy and parish lay delegates that were elected to Synod at parish AGMs. These delegates will form the body of the Synod
- Information relating to nominations with a slate of positions for which elections will be held. Nominations close on September 30, 2026
- Guidelines for Resolutions and a form for submitting resolutions for consideration by the Synod. **Consider submitting resolutions that you or your parish believe to be important for the Synod to consider.** While resolutions can be received up to Friday October 16th at 5:00 p.m., only those received by September 15, 2026 will be included in the Convening Circular and be considered as "B" motions.

In addition, guidance videos have been prepared:

- **Welcome Video** – Bishop Naboth gives a brief introduction and welcome to Synod delegates
- **Resolutions** – what are they, how do they work and what our parishes can do if they want to put forth resolutions,
- **Nominations** for the different committees and groups that work together to support the work of our Diocese.

All the information and videos can be found on our Diocesan website [HERE](#).

It is our hope that our time together at Synod will bring spiritual renewal as we face current challenges. Through prayer, worship, fellowship, discussion and studying God's word, may we be led in our conversations and decisions.

We ask for your continued prayers for the members of Synod, the Synod Agenda Committee and more importantly all of "Team Rupert's Land".

Blessings,
The Synod Agenda Planning Committee



Photo: [Josh Apple](#)