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CONNECTING CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

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CHANGE

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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.

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Photo: Bernd Dittrich

A dear friend of mine, with whom I have had many fruitful conversations, had a habit of insisting that everything is relative. This frustrated me, as the assertion is contradictory: everything cannot be relative if the statement itself is presented as an absolute. Whenever I pointed this out, he would simply wave me off, and I would sigh and change the subject, resigned to our inability to understand one another.

After several such exchanges, I finally insisted that some things must be absolute. When he challenged me to name one, I exasperatedly blurted out, "Change." I explained that change is a certainty: it has happened, is happening, and will continue to happen all around us. He gave a slight nod, suggesting I had finally gotten through to him (at least, somewhat).

I once wrote an article about how Christianity is a faith full of paradoxes. We find life by losing it, strength through weakness, freedom through surrender, and hope in suffering. Perhaps change is another such paradox: we must continually become something new while remaining grounded in something eternal. We are called to grow and transform while finding our foundation in the unchanging nature of God. After all, change is constant, yet "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Change is rarely comfortable. Sometimes we must surrender, grieve, or let go. As Bishop Naboth once said to me, "The seed must rot and die in the ground in order to germinate." We are creatures of habit, drawn to routine and stability, yet these can be difficult to maintain in a changing world. Sometimes change is a minor inconvenience; sometimes it leaves us feeling as though a part of ourselves has been utterly destroyed. And yet, we press on.

Of course, not all change is good. We can become more apathetic instead of compassionate, more closed-minded instead of understanding. The question is not simply whether we will change, but whether we will become more Christlike. Discerning which changes are for our betterment requires intentional time in prayer. There, we can seek God's wisdom, trusting in the unchanging foundation of His love.

Perhaps this is one of the great paradoxes of our faith: we are called to change continually, yet never undertake that change alone. We are always becoming, but always loved. We do not know what tomorrow will bring or who we might become, but we can take comfort in knowing that the God who accompanies us through every season remains steadfast.

My friend moved away several years ago, and though we still talk regularly, I sometimes wonder what he would say if I revisited that conversation. Perhaps we would both be less quick to dismiss the other's perspective. I might have more to say about change, and he about relativity. Either way, I now realize that my strength and solace are founded in the unchanging nature of God. I hope this realization will change how I approach the next conversation in which a misunderstanding frustrates me.

This issue begins with Bishop Naboth's Charge to Synod 2026. Next, Amanda McKenzie offers reflections on how her life has changed since the death of her daughter. Following this, Obren Amiesimaka exhorts us to more boldly evangelize by proclaiming the Good News of our Anglican faith in word and deed. Lastly, Donna Royer shares some experiences that have helped her realize that there are things we may not understand, but building a trust in God's love is essential to carry us through tough moments.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert's Land News

Bishop's Charge to Synod 2026

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

The God Who Meets Us in the Silence



"Speaking truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body is Let's pray, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped..." (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Gracious and holy God, may the truth be spoken with courage, humility, and love. May only the truth be heard, received, and understood. Silence every falsehood, confusion, fear, and hidden agenda. Let honesty guide every word, wisdom shape every response, and justice be served with mercy and grace. May hearts be open, minds be clear, and may your light reveal what is right and true. In all things, let truth prevail. Amen.

Arthur Sicard was eighteen years old when an ordinary day on his family's dairy farm near Montreal gave birth to an extraordinary idea. Winter made milk delivery difficult. Roads disappeared beneath the snow, communities became harder to reach, and farm work was frequently interrupted. One day, Sicard watched a neighbouring farmer's harvesting machine at work. He saw its rotating mechanism gather the crop and throw the straw and chaff aside. He began to wonder: if a machine could gather and throw straw, could a similar machine gather and throw snow?

The idea came to him in 1894, but its fulfilment did not come quickly. Sicard carried that question for more than thirty years. He observed, experimented, adapted existing machinery, and persevered. In 1925, when he was almost fifty, he produced a practical truck-mounted snowblower. By 1927, Sicard snowblowers were clearing roads in Outremont, helping people, goods, and services move through the winter. Sicard did not wait for winter to disappear. He did not deny its severity or simply complain about the roads. He took the conditions seriously enough to imagine a different response. Winter presented the challenge; patient construction created a way through it.

On 31 May 2025, when I stood before the Electoral Synod as your bishop-elect, I spoke of a familiar Canadian saying: Canada has two seasons - winter and construction. Arthur Sicard's story suggests that these seasons are not necessarily opposites. Sometimes winter is precisely what calls construction into being. Sometimes the obstacle before us awakens the imagination within us.

The Church also experiences winter. We know the winter of grief and uncertainty, demographic change, financial pressure, strained relationships, aging buildings, and familiar ways of ministry that no longer carry us as they once did. We should not deny these realities. But neither should we allow them to persuade us that our mission must stop. Winter can become a workshop for faithful innovation.

Faithful innovation does not mean abandoning the Gospel or

disregarding our tradition. Sicard adapted a familiar mechanism to meet a new situation. In the same way, the Gospel remains unchanged, while the structures, habits, and methods through which we proclaim it may need to be renewed. We can look carefully at what is already in our hands and ask how it might be used differently for the sake of Christ and our neighbours.

Our readings speak to people who do not have everything figured out. They speak to tired people, burdened people, and faithful people who have reached the edge of what they know and are asking, 'Lord, what comes next?' That makes them good words for a Synod. That makes them good words for Team Rupert's Land. God is present in both seasons. In the winter that restores and forms us, and in the construction through which God makes room for new life.



Mr. Brian Crow receiving the Order of Rupert's Land

Photo: Anna Baran

God Restores

Elijah has proclaimed truth and confronted injustice. Now the mighty prophet sits beneath a broom tree, frightened and emptied. He then prayed, 'It is enough, O Lord.' Leaders know that prayer. Congregations know that prayer. Dioceses know that prayer. After demographic change, financial pressure, institutional uncertainty, isolation, and division, even faithful people can become weary.

But notice what God does. God does not shame Elijah. God feeds him. God lets him rest. God stayed near. Before giving Elijah another assignment, God restores his servant. This is holy winter. It's not abandonment, but restoration. It is not wasted time, but preparation for the road ahead. We will build this diocese on prayer, grace, truth, and the restoring love of God.

Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, whom we remember today, lived in a Church under pressure. They did not answer panic with more panic. Both are recognized as Doctors of the Church. Teresa is known for her work, *The Interior Castle*, and John wrote *The Dark Night of the Soul*. Both works speak about listening to our inner being. They entered more deeply into prayer. Their witness reminds us that renewal moves from the inside out. God touches the heart, and then the hands begin to serve. We may revise budgets, structures, and patterns of ministry, but no budget can love a neighbour, no building can follow Jesus, and no strategic plan can pray. Only people can do that. People whose hearts are being renewed in Christ.

At Horeb, Elijah encounters wind, an earthquake, and fire. Yet God is made known in the sound of sheer silence. I believe God is calling Rupert's Land to become a listening Church. Listening before speaking. Praying before deciding. Attending to the Spirit in:

- the small parish,
- the overlooked neighbourhood,
- the voice of an Elder,
- the questions of a young person, and
- the wisdom of a newcomer.

Courage, Connection, and Change

Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." He does not promise an easy road. He promises himself: "I am the way." Our hope is not a building, a bank balance, or a perfect plan. Our hope is Jesus Christ, present with us and leading us.

That is how I understand our Synod theme. Courage means telling the truth and taking the next faithful step. Connection means remembering that no parish, ministry, or leader stands alone. Change means allowing the Holy Spirit to reshape us for the mission God has given us now.

Without prayer,

- courage becomes noise,

- connection becomes networking,

- and change becomes management.

But with prayer,

- courage becomes faithfulness,

- connection becomes communion, and

- change becomes transformation.

What I Am Asking of Us

Over the next two years, I am asking every parish and diocesan ministry to work on four commitments. These are not four new programs from the diocesan office. They are a common direction for work that we will shape together.

1. A shared vision: Each parish and ministry will identify one outward-looking mission priority. One clear way you will serve your neighbours and share the love of Christ. One way that love takes flesh is when people are fed and welcomed. Many of our parishes already run food pantries, prepare meals, welcome newcomers, and visit isolated neighbours. On that day when Jesus fed the 5,000, he did not allow the disciples to send people away hungry. He said, and still says to us today, "You give them something to eat." I ask every parish to make one intentional "feed the neighbour" commitment within its outward mission priority. By Synod 2028, we will bring these commitments together in a diocesan mission map so we can see where God is at work and where support is needed.

2. Shared resources: We will take an honest inventory of what God has placed in our hands. For example, people, finances, buildings, land, technology, knowledge, and relationships. Then we will ask what can be shared across parish and Archdeaconry lines. A building used only a few hours each week may still become a gift to the community. A skilled treasurer, musician, administrator, or teacher may be able to strengthen more than one congregation. A parish with retired clergy may share that gift with a struggling congregation which cannot afford the cost of supply clergy.

3. Shared leadership: We will strengthen formation for ordained and lay ministry, including wardens, vocational deacons, youth, and others whose gifts are emerging. I ask every parish to identify and accompany at least one person whose leadership God may be calling forth. Do not wait until every qualification is in place. Notice the gift, name it, and help it grow.

4. Stronger Together: We will look for practical ways to cooperate in administration, formation, outreach, property, and reconciliation. No parish is disposable. No community is invisible. No leader should carry the burden alone.

Mission Week: Remembering for the Sake of Truth, Relationship and Mission

The Anglican Diocese of Rupert's Land was established by Royal Letters Patent on May 21, 1849, and David Anderson was consecrated its first bishop on May 29. Beginning in 2027, I propose that we observe Rupert's Land Mission Week from May 23 to 30, concluding with a diocesan gathering on or near May 29 to mark the founding of our Anglican diocese.



Ms. Ann Timonin receiving the Order of Rupert's Land

Photo: Cinna Baran

But we must be clear about what began in 1849 and what did not. This land was not an empty field, forest, or river system waiting for the Church to arrive. Long before first contact and the arrival of Anglican missionaries, Indigenous people had their own societies, systems of governance, economies, kinship networks, spiritual traditions, and relationships with the land and with one another. Newcomers were often sustained by the knowledge, generosity, and care of Indigenous peoples. God was present here already.

We are therefore not remembering a time when this land or its peoples were "found." We are remembering the establishment of an Anglican institution whose history includes faithfulness and failure, sacrifice and service, mission and harm. That history includes the leadership and witness of Indigenous Christians such as the Reverend Henry Budd—

Sakachuwesum. It must also make room for Indigenous experiences, voices, resistance, leadership, and spiritual traditions. As a Church, we have apologized for the spiritual harm caused by our actions. Honest remembrance must lead



Photo: Krista Waring

to repentance, renewed relationships, and faithful attention to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action addressed to the churches.

During Mission Week, parishes can share their stories, pray with common resources, listen to Indigenous voices, gather and eat together, and undertake one visible act of service. At our diocesan gathering, we will give thanks for what was faithful, lament the harm that was done, honour those whose stories have too often been overlooked, and renew our commitment to reconciliation and mission.

Reconciliation

We remember not for nostalgia or self-congratulation, but to ask a living question: **What does faithfulness require of us now**? That question must lead to concrete commitments shaped by Indigenous voices and priorities.

Reconciliation is not an optional diocesan project. It belongs to the Gospel. Beginning in 2027, I propose an annual Indigenous Ministry and Reconciliation Offering on a Sunday near National Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21 or the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30.

This will be an invitation, not another levy. It will support Indigenous-led ministry, relationships, travel, education, healing, and cultural renewal. We will report each year on how the money is used, and Indigenous priorities will guide the work.

Everything Counts

In 1995, Oseola McCarty, a retired washerwoman in Mississippi, gave $150,000 (60%) of her life savings to help students attend university. She had built that gift little by little over a lifetime. Her simple wisdom was, "Everything counts."

That is true in the Church. Every prayer counts. Every hour volunteered counts. Every visit, meal, act of kindness, and dollar counts. Stewardship begins with a question: what has God entrusted to us, and how will we use it for mission?

So let me speak plainly about diocesan assessment. Our shared ministry depends on parishes contributing 12.5 percent of yearly income, fully and on time. I know this can be difficult. Parishes are facing the same rising costs and pressures as the diocese. If your parish anticipates difficulty, please speak with us early. Silence leaves the burden for other congregations to carry. Honest conversation gives us a chance to plan and help one another.

The Road to Synod 2028

The months after this Synod will be our winter work: listening, praying, healing, taking stock, and choosing priorities. In 2027, the construction begins in earnest: acting, sharing, repairing, experimenting, and strengthening what bears good fruit.

At Synod 2028, we will report honestly. What did we try? What did we learn? Where did we see new life? What must we stop, continue, or change?

We will not measure faithfulness only by attendance, budgets, or buildings. We will also ask:

- Are people growing in prayer and discipleship?

- Are hungry people being fed?

- Do our neighbours experience the love of Christ through us?

- Are we becoming more like Jesus?

A Church that Gives Itself Away

Elijah found God in the silence.

Teresa and John found God in the depths of prayer.

The disciples found God in the face of Jesus.



And the living Christ meets us here - in this Synod, in this Diocese.

So let us become a present and deeply listening Church.

- A Church willing to do the quiet work of winter and the demanding work of construction
- A Church that builds trust,
- discerns wisely,
- accompanies with hope,
- shares generously,
- feeds the hungry,
- walks the path of reconciliation,
- honours its many communities, and
- gives itself joyfully to one mission.

Because we are:

One Diocese in **Many Communities** pursuing **One Mission**.

We are:

Team Rupert's Land with **Courage** to tell the truth, **Connection** to carry one another, and faith to embrace the **Change** through which God is making all things new.

And when anxiety rises, let us hear Jesus again:

'Do not let your hearts be troubled.'

We do not know every turn in the road, but we know the One who is the Way.

- The God who sustained Elijah,

- the God who guided Teresa and John, and the

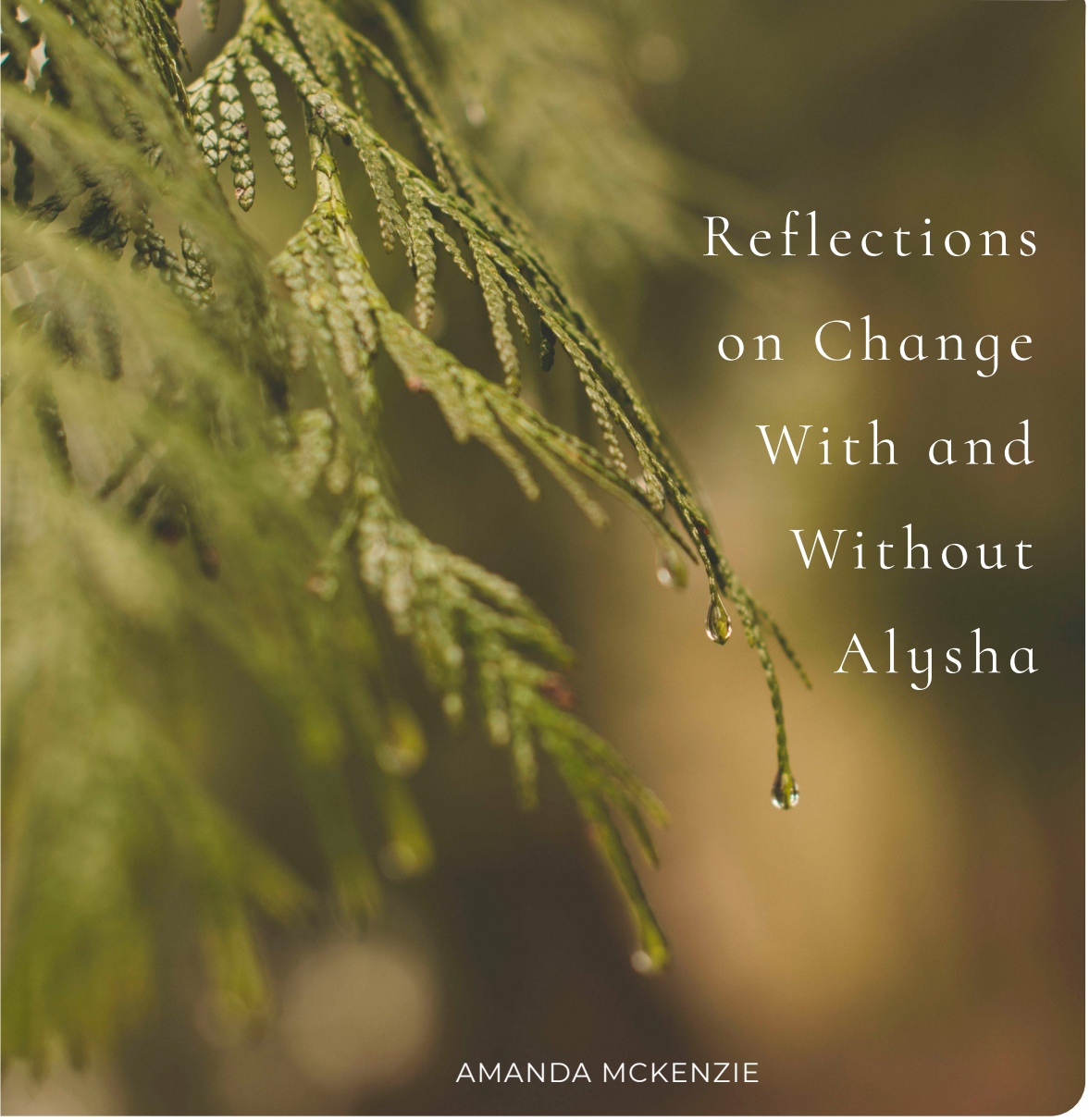
- God revealed in Jesus Christ is not finished with Rupert's Land.

Like Oseala McCarty: Everything counts. Everyone has something to offer. Some will pray through the winter; some will draw the plans; some will carry the tools; some will clear the rubble; some will welcome the neighbours; and all of us can make room for what God is building. Together, by the grace of God, we can become the Church Christ is calling us to be: **Team Rupert's Land: Courage, Connection and Change**. *Amen*.



NABOTH MANZONGO

Naboth Manzongo is the Bishop of Rupert's Land



Reflections on Change With and Without Alysha

AMANDA MCKENZIE

Content warning: This piece addresses challenging realities surrounding homelessness, addiction, and death. We invite readers to approach it with care and discretion.

Change came to me through grief and love. Alysha was 32, homeless, and lived on the streets of Winnipeg for years. She struggled with addictions. The world saw her as "a problem." I saw her as my daughter.

I would meet her on the street, under bridges, riverbanks, shelters, and homeless encampments in all four corners of the city. My wonderful husband Richard and I would make her favourite homemade soups which we filled in empty yogurt containers, her favourite peanut butter & jam on bannock, and of course, her fried egg sandwiches. We would bring water and juice with extra warm clothes, shoes, warm blankets, tents etc. I had stopped lecturing over the years. I didn't preach. I just sat with her and her partner of seven years. I tried to show them Christ's love. Caring for someone doesn't have to be fancy or elaborate; sometimes it means just showing up. That's what Jesus did. Still, I would silently pray over them.

Then came the day that I was called to the St. Boniface Hospital. I saw her hooked up to the machines keeping her alive. I broke down. Even though she lived a hard dangerous life and I thought I prepared myself for this day, no parent is ever prepared. The doctors said that she didn't have much time. Deep in my heart I knew her time here on earth was short. I stayed with her, never leaving for the next 26 hours.

Alysha received her last rites three different times. First by a Catholic priest at 4:00 am. Then three hours later an Anglican priest showed up with second last rites. Six hours had passed, and I gave my girl a traditional cedar bath and blessed her with Holy Cedar Oil. Right there in the room, medicine and prayer were together. The Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit were together, washing her and blessing her for her journey home. I allowed them to turn off the machines, and an Indigenous Anglican priest came and prayed her home. Three traditions. One prayer. One daughter of God. The room was filled with priests, Christians, friends, and family. It taught me something right there about the church: when we lay down our walls, we are bigger together.

Without Alysha, I changed. My heart broke open even more, and it stayed open. Now when I come to Winnipeg, I look for the Alyshas—the ones on the street still suffering. I know that Christ was there with my girl, and He is there with them. We

hand out whatever we are able. But there are other changes in my life now, too. I don't have to search for my girl this winter. I don't have to worry about which homeless encampment she's in, or what tent, bridge, or doorway she might be surviving under when it's -30. I don't have to call the police and make another missing person report or call all the shelters if anyone has seen her.

I am so blessed she died in a clean hospital, surrounded by Christ, by Christians, and by Love. She was not found on the MMIWG2S list. She wasn't found in a dumpster or landfill somewhere. As an Indigenous mother, I ask how many of our Indigenous daughters who are homeless, who are addicts, get such a beautiful send off.

About two weeks after I buried Alysha, I was home alone in my bedroom crying uncontrollably. I was a wreck. Suddenly, as plain as can be, I heard Alysha shout out to me. She said: "Mom!" I had stopped crying and felt God all around me. Jesus' presence was in my doorway. He said five words to me: "She's in a beautiful place." Then a peace washed over me from head to toe that I cannot put into words myself. The only words that can describe what happened to me are in Philippians 4:7: "And peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." So much of my grief was lifted. I know without doubt that I was visited by the Holy Trinity. All honour, glory, and praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Later that day I went outside, sat by the river, laid tobacco down, and gave so much thanks as I wept in awe and gratitude. I asked Creator, "Why did you do this for me?" He replied: "You have much work ahead of you."

Two months after this experience, Bishop Don Philips came to my home in St. Malo for a visit and to request if I could do a sermon on the Holy Trinity, creation, and creation care at St. Peters in River Heights. I graciously accepted, because Creator God has given me so much that I may carry and preach his word. I also did a smudging of the residential school survivor flag and gave some medicine teachings. If someone said to me that I would be at peace and preaching about the Gospel 4 months after my daughter's burial, I would have said "absolutely not!" Yet there I was, with the people of St. Peters, receiving many holy kisses.

My journey through grief has brought me to a deeper understanding of the many ways I connect with God. This was



Photo: Ethereal Optics

something I carried with me when I spoke of my daughter at Synod this year.

When I addressed everyone, I held my eagle feather upright as a symbol of speaking the truth. But I also hold my rosary with it. For me personally, there is so much power in saying the whole rosary. Who knows pain better than The Holy Mary Mother of God? Holding the eagle feather and my rosary together connects my faith with my Indigenous teachings. These things are one of my paths, my connections, to the Creator.

Another one of those connections is smudging. This year, I was blessed to be the Elder who smudged the people on each day of our three-day Synod. I felt so privileged by Creator to



look into each person's eyes and see the Holy Spirit in them and to smudge each one personally. That is a feeling that surpasses any understanding. In the morning I was scheduled to start at 8:00 in the morning, but my wonderful husband helped me set up at 7:30 because we didn't want anyone to miss out. And people started lining up slowly at 7:35! It was cold and windy, but I was so grateful to be doing the Lord's work. So many people participated—more than I can recall.

On that first full day at Synod, there was a change I felt was in the atmosphere when I went to sit down and get started. Everyone was shaking hands, hugging, smiling; so many people looked peaceful and happy. I smiled to myself as I realized the Holy Spirit was already ahead of us. The Spirit was in the room. That was sacred. That's how we learn to walk in Spirit and Love together. I felt unity in Christ on a whole other level. I pray their light and mine continue to shine brightly without growing weary.

The Holy Trinity, Christian love, Alysha's presence, and my ancestors were all there. I carry them with me, and together they remind me that I am never walking this journey alone. We are never walking this journey alone.



AMANDA MCKENZIE

Amanda McKenzie is one of the Elders to the Bishop of Rupert's Land (since February 2021). She has been a devout Anglican all her life. She is a member of the Peter Ballantyne Band, Treaty #6, and she follows a Cree bloodline. Her traditional teachings come from her granny, father, and mother. Her passion is spreading the word of God's love and grace to whomever she meets.

Light of the World: City on a hill

OBREN AMIESIMAKA



Photo: Cinna Barán

The just concluded 121st Synod of the Diocese of Rupert's Land was a most wonderful experience marked by honest, robust, and fulsome discussions around the theme Courage, Connection and Change. Each discipleship table, peopled by Synod delegates from different parishes, contemplated each of the three 'C's comprising the theme in turn. This mix of representatives from parishes of different sizes, and from both within and without Winnipeg, was a very useful strategy as it enabled the exchange of ideas inspired by the different parish perspectives. I look forward to the summary of feedback from the deliberations once they are available.

When pondering the topic of 'change,' we were asked to outline what we believed needed to change in our diocese and, immediately, the charge of our Lord in Matthew 5:13-15 leapt into my heart: "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

This passage came within the context of us needing to raise the profile of the Diocese, and the Anglican Church in general, in the public consciousness.

Recent years have seen the media awash with church scandals and, increasingly, the rise of 'Christian nationalism' championed in no small way by the current US administration, as even a cursory search for 'Christian' news shows. This ideology of cloaking nationalist identity in Christian garb and wanting to use the power of government to impose that specific vision, has taken root amongst the US right, with two-thirds in support. Across the pond in the UK, the irony that those fanning the flames of Christian nationalism are themselves seldom likely to be churchgoers, pray or read the Bible, has been underlined.

As some of the loudest voices claiming Christianity, whether on social, digital or traditional media, are often those using our sacred faith as a cudgel to fight their ideological battles,

it is no surprise that the trend of fewer and fewer people identifying as Christian continues. The evidence is clear in the emptying pews, dwindling finances and closing churches. A presenter at Synod mentioned an estimation, recounted by CNN, that 100,000 churches in the US are poised to close within a decade; with Canada facing a similar deluge.

Such images of Christianity cannot be left to take up all the space in the public sphere. We need to present the true message of Christ to the people; the message of love, mercy, justice, righteousness, and humility. A change I think is needed, is for the diocese (all of us) to take Christianity, and Anglicanism in specific, to meet the people where they are. These days that is on their phones and in front of their screens.

Brands which are household names, and one would not think need to bother about advertising, still spend hugely on visibility. Fortune 500 companies, e.g. Amazon, P&G, Alphabet (Google), PepsiCo, Walmart etc., spent $254 billion USD on advertising in the US alone. They do this not to waste money but to remain in the public consciousness.

We have something better than any product; we have Jesus Christ. We should not demur in bringing the light of Christ to where the people are. We have a good starting point as Canadians already have a high perception of Christianity, with 57% holding a positive view.

Notwithstanding, certain academic questions spring to mind:

What do people in our geographical area feel when they think about 'Christianity' or 'church?' Not just in terms of perception of an abstract concept. Is it something they feel they should be a part of?

Do they know about Anglicanism in general? Or more specifically, do they know that the Diocese of Rupert's Land exists? Do they have an idea of our values, beliefs and what we stand for?

For instance, do they know that our diocese:

- Stands firmly in the belief that God is love?
- Welcomes female priests as equal in the house of God?



Photo: Jacob Bentzinger

- Welcomes 2SLGBTQIA+ people and equal marriage?
- Actively advocates for and serves the people Christ put at the foreground of His earthly ministry - the poor, sick, newcomer, ostracised, incarcerated, forgotten by society, those considered sinners.
- Has truth and reconciliation, and walking in respectful relationship with our Indigenous relations as a core principle?

Do people know what our Christian views are on prevailing social issues? Please do not get me wrong, I am not suggesting that we court controversy or only speak out on issues for sake of speaking. No. Rather, are we being the voice of the voiceless on every day, bread and butter, issues that trouble

people's minds? The voice of reason? Honest advocates?

Does anyone, e.g. in the media, even seek the opinion of the church on any issues? Or do they even consider the church's opinion worthy of notice?

We should be vocal in praising what is good and calling out what is wrong. Christ did so with all, even the powerful. He praised the Centurion's faith: "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matthew 8:10b) and healed his servant. He also did not hesitate in pointing out the failings of the religious leaders; Matthew 23 contains many an example. For instance, the 13th verse reads: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in."

The people of Rupert's Land do a lot. We share our assets—space, talents, organisational capacity, etc.—through plenty of outreach activities, which the diocese will diagram in a 'Mission Map,' thanks to a Synod resolution which was passed this year. However, outreach need not be limited to service programs. Visibility in civic/public life is particularly essential for initiating a virtuous circle to boost our ability to serve even more. It is a way to let our light shine before others, so they may see Christ working through us and be drawn to the Father.

A change in perspective is also needed. It is not uncommon to see a sense of resignation to the inevitability of decline in amongst congregations, clergy and laity alike. That feeling of everyone waiting to see which parish will be the last to close and when. Let us not be maudlin.

Jesus is alive! Christ is revival! Our church ought to have an outlook of growth, vibrancy and vitality; secure in the faith that the Anglican Church has endured for about five centuries now and, with Christ as our centre, will continue to not just survive but thrive.

To move in this direction, amongst others, methinks we should have a media/public relations ministry that is vibrant in leveraging legacy and social media to elevate the visibility of the diocese.

We cannot remain a church marked by grey hairs, beautiful as they are. We need to proactively invite in the children and youth, and re-welcome those in middle age who may have lapsed in faith. There are many who are 'spiritual', seeking connection with the Divine, but do not know that the church is the place for them—yet. There are many newcomers—Anglicans inclusive—who, upon arrival, do not join our

Photo: Marcus Schumacher



church or lapse in faith altogether. We need to be the light that draws them to the body of Christ here.

Through public visibility, we would be the city on a hill, doing works of evangelism. We would be heeding the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.""

When people need salt, let them know that we are the salt of the earth. When they need light, let our light already be shining bright and not be under a basket. Let us be the city on a hill that cannot be hidden.



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."

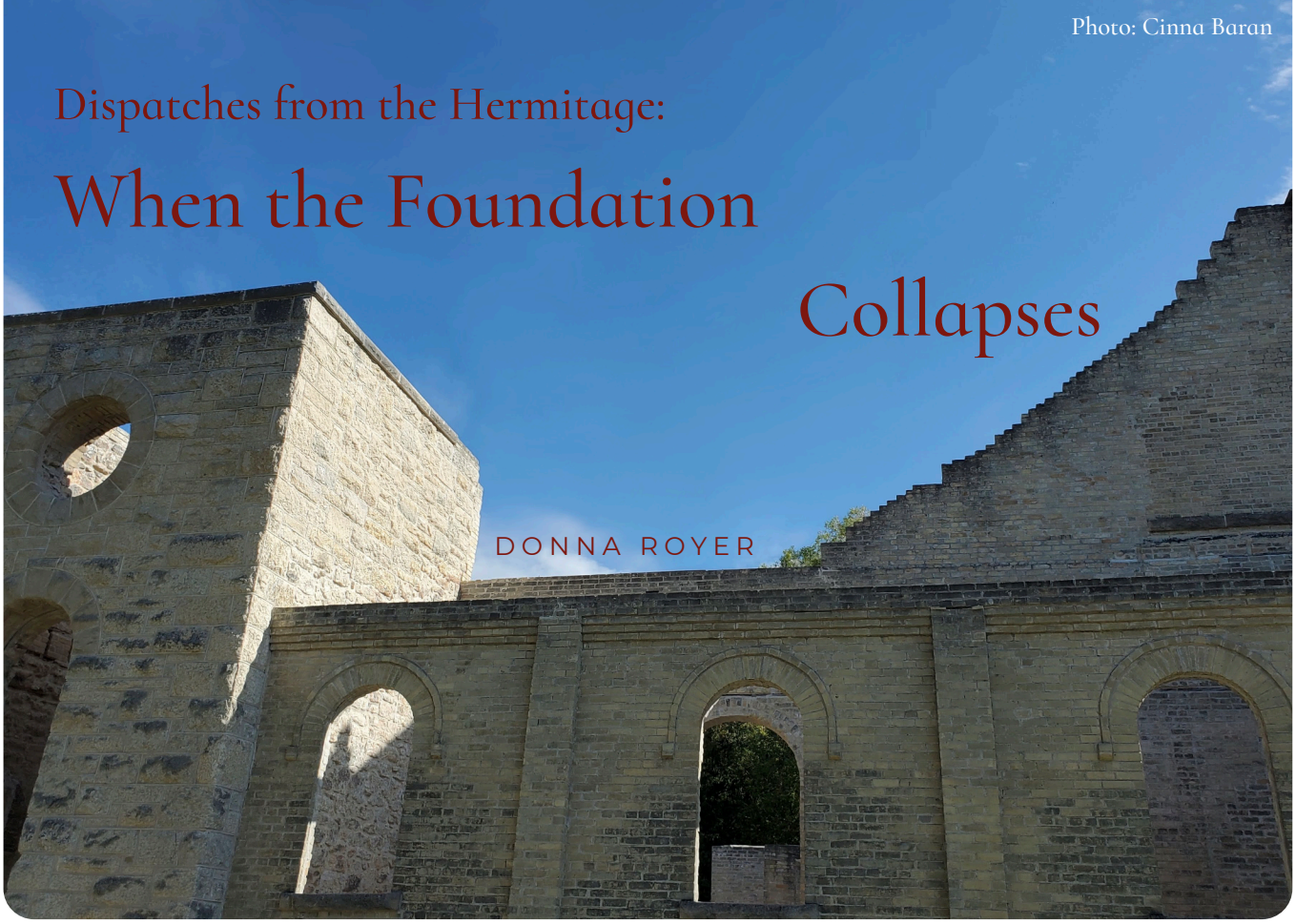


Photo: Cinna Baran

Dispatches from the Hermitage:

When the Foundation Collapses

DONNA ROYER

In the unadorned room of a large stone monastery in St. Boniface, my classmates and I sat in a circle on an assorted collection of straight-backed chairs. The mid-November sun shone through the tall windows as the metal radiators under them clanked to heat the room. While my husband and I had only separated a few short weeks before, attendance at this weekend retreat was compulsory. And so I sat, raw and emotionally wobbly. I have no memory of the session's specific topic, only that we were listening to some popular music about a broken relationship. Sensing I was about to have yet another crying jag, I stood abruptly and left, crossing the hallway to a nearby empty room. A few minutes later, an acquaintance, trying to be pastorally supportive, offered me a box of tissues and gave me an unwanted hug—whispering in my ear 'God works in mysterious ways, always remember His ways are higher than our ways.'

As the years went by, and disruptions to other plans arose, another friend would commonly joke "God's got some explaining to do!" When I struggled with the demands of supporting my mom during her cognitive decline, I was assured "God has a reason, you just don't see it right now."

I understand these phrases, and a multitude of others which are routinely used by faithful people, are intended to capture the sovereignty and trustworthiness of God. They are offered as comfort—to themselves and me—in the face of unwelcome and unexpected situations. For years they reflected my personal tendency to believe that when I reached the end of my abilities to understand things I had two options: I could assume that people smarter than me either knew or would eventually figure out 'why,' or I could trust that God had a reason. What I discovered was that understanding and reason were the sure foundation I had built my life upon—not Christ.

Throughout public school my son and I had an understanding—when he graduated high school, I was leaving Canada to minister in Africa. That day eventually arrived. Over the course of a few months, I culled my possessions to what would fit in my suitcases, sold my home, and said my goodbyes all with the expectation it would be several years until I returned to Canada. On a bitterly cold, dark January morning I began my journey, arriving quite bedraggled half a world away two days later on a hot and humid night. Four months later, the unexpected happened. I suffered a mental health crisis and returned to Canada. While a relatively small slice of time when considered in the context of my

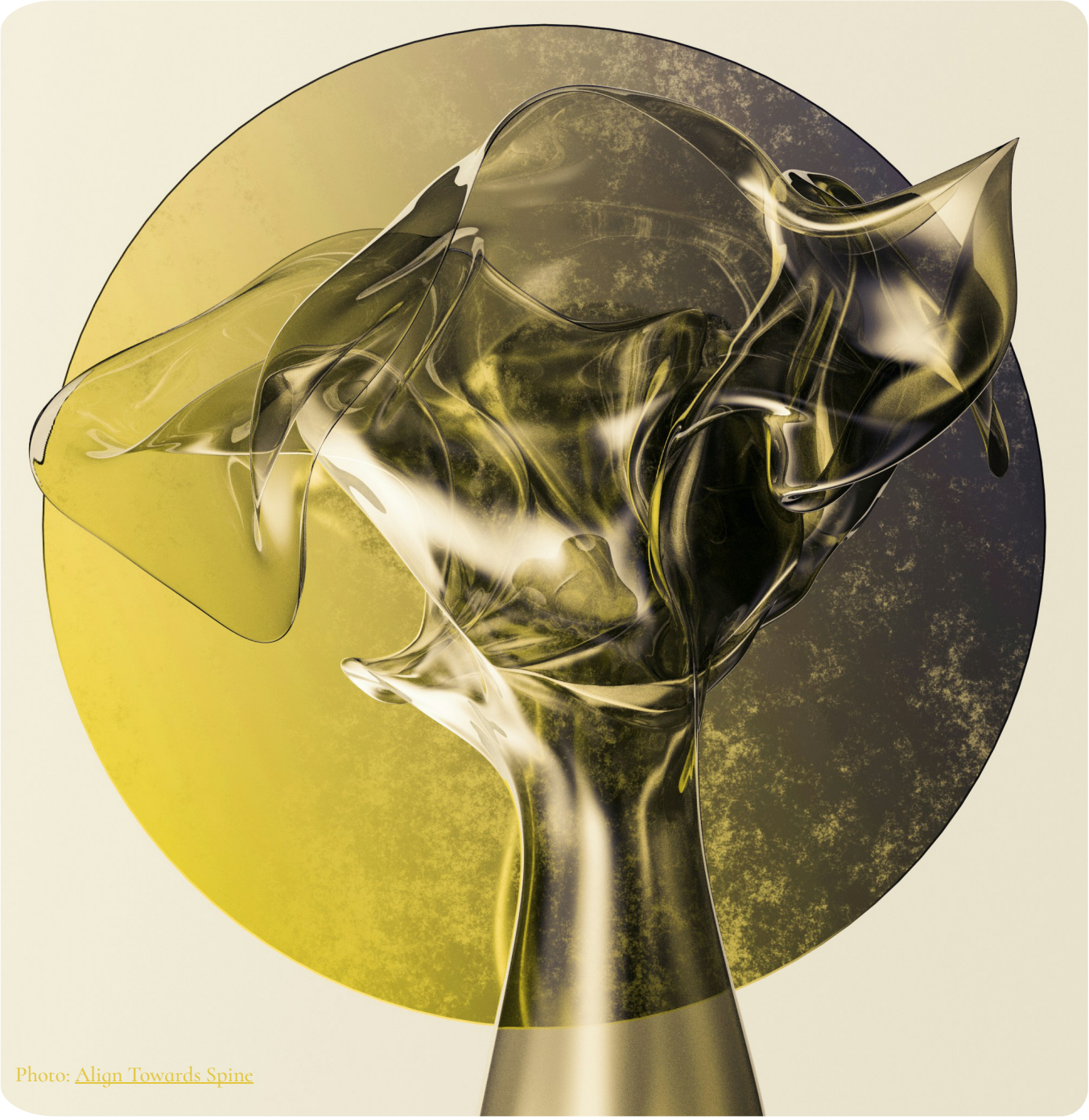


Photo: Align Towards Spine

whole life, I cannot begin to number all the losses, changes, and adjustments I made pursuing and recovering from that dream.

One of the deepest wounds was to my faith. I had prayed, diligently discerned, and trusted God's plan. Others had done the same. I didn't, and still don't, believe we failed to discern God's will, though I now allow it as a possibility. What I do know is I felt shattered and betrayed. One evening, going into some meeting in the parish's multi-purpose room, a kind parishioner reminded me I was loved. I remember, for a long time afterwards, thinking 'And what good does that do–it doesn't fix anything.' My life had imploded, and being loved wasn't going to piece it back together. Over time, however, I discovered it was the very key I needed.

I had grieved losses created by change before, but while doing so, there had always been a sense of a before and an after. This felt different. My home and job were gone. My ability to dream of a future and trust it might happen had disappeared. I felt like the God I'd known and loved had betrayed me. The very ground of my world had collapsed. For a very long time, the unbearably broken present was all I could see.

On the advice of a soul friend (spiritual director) I 'borrowed'

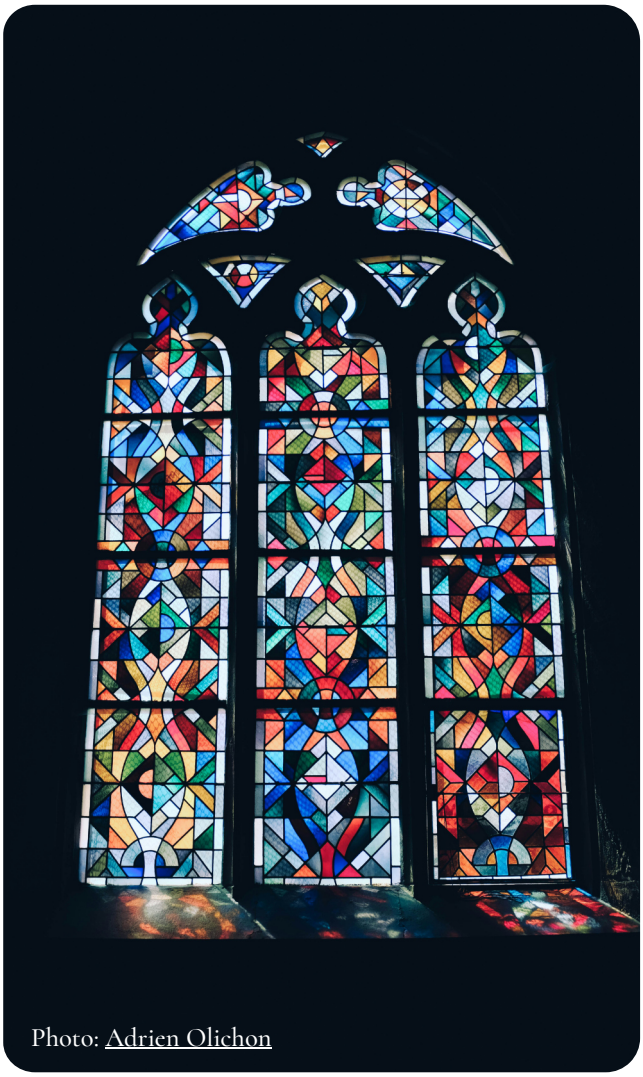


Photo: Adrien Olichon

the faith of others and continued to attend worship services and participated in the Eucharist. He reassured me I was welcome until or unless I decided to separate myself from God. What I remember most vividly from those services was how the appointed Old Testament readings from the Book of Job seemed to so perfectly describe my ash pile. The weeks passed. I began to realize that friends and family cared about me enough to still be trying to help—regardless of how their support landed. Their love didn't *fix* anything, but it *changed* everything.

Practicalities such as sorting out housing and financing my day-to-day expenses were the first pieces that came together. I began to look forward to and schedule meet ups with friends. I took a couple of long solo road trips re-learning to trust myself to make decisions. On one of those trips, somewhere in the Yukon, I switched on CBC briefly and caught an interview with a woman who'd been trafficked from Eastern Europe to Toronto. By the time the reception faded out I had heard enough to realize I didn't need to understand why Africa didn't work out, or if God had a reason for my circumstances. This woman had shared a recovery that was not dependent on her understanding why this event had happened in her life. I could do the same.

Once I stopped requiring answers from God, I was able to see that Christ's love had been present all along in the care and support my friends and family had been lavishing upon me. I saw my demands for an explanation as a bid to control God—to be a god, rather than a beloved creation. Using language I found in the Desert Abbas and Ammas writings, I began to internally refer to my desire for control as a demon who tried to tempt me away from God. I adopted the practice of saying, or at least thinking, "God willing" ('insha'Allah') whenever I made future plans. I recited Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference," as if it were the rosary.

Some days trusting that God's love will be enough to get me through things is easier than others. I still prefer answers and to understand why things happen. I believe God may often, or even always, have a reason. What has changed is that I stopped demanding that God have or provide the explanation to me.



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.