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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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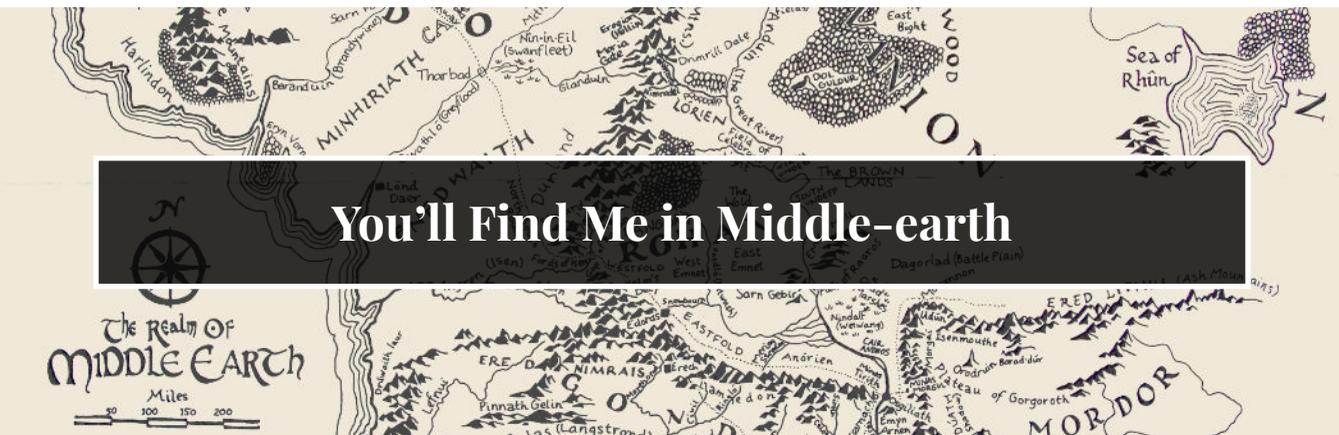


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You'll Find Me in Middle-earth

I think we all have that book – the book that sets something alight in us, the book to which we point and say “I found myself here.” For me, that book is *The Lord of the Rings*. When I was 13, my best friend lent me her copies, and I absolutely devoured them. I couldn’t get enough. And, when I went looking for more, I found a whole compendium of backstory and mythology to explore. I owe a lot of who I am today to that book and to J. R. R. Tolkien himself. I know I’m not alone in that either.

Tolkien is, somewhat infamously, linked to his friend C. S. Lewis. They were both part of an informal literary society called The Inklings, which was associated with the University of Oxford. They, and other members like Charles Williams and Owen Barfield, would gather at the Eagle and Child pub to discuss each other’s unfinished works; *The Lord of the Rings* and Lewis’s *Out of the Silent Planet* both made an appearance at one time. Their work has had an undoubted influence on literature and theology.

In this issue, we’re going to explore that influence. Michael Gilmour offers a companion piece to his 2018 article “C. S. Lewis, the Great War, and an Unwitting Canadian Connection,” about how Lewis deals with the affects of the Great War in his writing. Hannah Foulger writes about the support and community artists need to really thrive. Graham MacFarlane explains why he taught *The Lord of the Rings* to campers at Manitoba Pioneer Camp. And, in via media, Ryan Turnbull looks into the purpose of land acknowledgements.

I’m also sad to announce that this will be my last issue. Between this, my freelance work, and being the primary caregiver for my daughter, I’m feeling a bit like “butter scraped over too much bread,” to borrow a phrase from Bilbo. Since I started at the tail-end of 2016, I’ve put together 36 monthly issues and hundreds of newsletters. I feel I’ve said all I needed to say, and it’s time for a new voice at the helm.

I won’t forget my time with *Rupert’s Land News* anytime soon, and I am so privileged to have gotten to know so many people in this diocese. I want to say thank you to Bishop Geoff, former Bishop Don, and the rest of the diocesan staff for their unwavering support. Thank you to my advisory board – Chris Trott, Bonnie Dowling, Pam Bann, and, formerly, Susan Titterington – for their insights, and a special thank you to Pam for proofreading every single newsletter. Thank you to the designer, Mike Berg, the silent partner who has been just as much a part of this magazine as I have been. Thank you to the writers for filling these pages with amazing ideas. And, thank you, readers, for keeping this project going.

A new editor will be taking over in September, and I’m excited to see where this publication goes next.



Kyla Neufeld is the editor of *Rupert’s Land News*.



Inklings

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Image: [Claudio Schwarz](#)

*“Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.”*
– Psalm 62:11

Called to offer last rites, I made my way to the hospital. It was week five of the COVID-19 lockdown. I was called to the bedside of my teacher, one who had invested in me along a path of self-discovery, no gloves or masks required.

She pointed to what appeared to be an empty corner of the room and whispered, “They came this morning, and some are laughing.”

I asked, “Are you afraid?”

“Afraid of what?” she laughed back.

We prayed, but at the end of the prayers she couldn’t speak anymore. We held hands, and she looked into my eyes and smiled. She was letting go, and she invited me to share this sacred time. There were no words spoken, just her warm smile and firm grip upon my hand, giving me a glimpse of God’s vast embrace.

It was an extraordinarily beautiful experience, and it aligns with hundreds, if not thousands, of experiences in my life that unfurl with such grace and depth. Regardless of where and when we find ourselves, we are constantly navigating a complex set of relationships. Relationships, as far as I can tell, are always multi-relational: not just human to human, but human to land, Creator, time, the air in our lungs, and so on. Should we try to count the relationships represented by three humans, I know we would spend a great time enjoying the connections that we may have missed.

In this time of exile, this space of yearning, I believe God has called upon the Body of Christ to exercise its collective memory, wisdom, and ancient relationships to speak prophetically to the world and minister quietly to the neighbourhood. In hundreds of conversations I have had since March 12, 2020, participants have shared a notion that God is doing something with us right now. They share with me news that could have been lifted right from Samuel, “When the Word of God was rare...” God came and spoke to people in the fabric of relationships, clearly, lovingly and hopefully.

I think the Church has already been changed by God, who has not left us alone in exile. God’s power and voice have risen in the centuries-old DNA of the risen Body as a groundswell: “Once God has spoken” and now “twice have I heard: that power belongs to God, and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.” As I explore God’s written word each day, I encounter a God who forms, cultivates, and then permeates relationships throughout all history. God continuously weaves human relationships, always returning us to right and just relationships for the sake of creation, a place from where we hear again what God has spoken.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert’s Land

Fragility, Fiction, and Faith: C. S. Lewis's War Wounds

MICHAEL GILMOUR

*This is a companion piece to "[C. S. Lewis, the Great War, and an Unwitting Canadian Connection](#)" in December 2018's issue of *Rupert's Land News on Sacred Space*.*

Fragility. On one of the branches of the River Cherwell, near Magdalen College of the University of Oxford, there is an area once reserved for male students to bathe nude. In a 1922 diary entry, C. S. Lewis records swimming there, adding a sobering observation: "Amid so much nudity I was interested to note the passing of my own generation: two years ago every second man had a wound mark, but I did not see one today." Lewis had scars of his own, and not just physical ones: "The early loss of my mother, great unhappiness at school, and the shadow of the last war... had given me a very pessimistic view of existence."

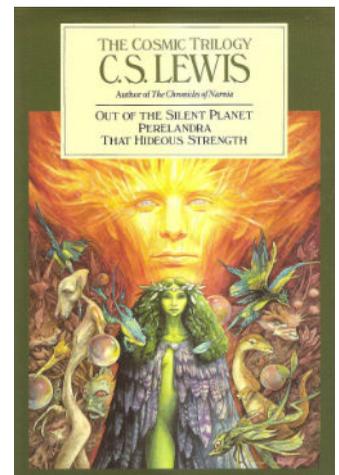
He describes the physical injuries sustained in the trenches of France in a 1918 letter, with apparent understatement to spare his father some anxiety: "I was... hit in the back of the left hand, on the left leg from behind and just above the knee, and in the left side just under the arm pit. All three were only flesh wounds." While recovering in London, he again downplays the situation in a letter to a friend: "There are still two pieces of shrapnel in my chest, but they give me no discomfort." Others in Lewis's circle had similar experiences. Fellow Inkling Hugo Dyson, for one, fought in the Battle of the Somme (1916), the Battle of Arras (1917), and the Battle of Passchendaele at Ypres (1918), and was badly wounded in the last. One suspects there is something of J. R. R. Tolkien's memories of the trenches in later descriptions of the Dead Marshes.

According to Lewis's letters of the 1930s and '40s, there were continual reminders of aging, mortality, vulnerability, emotional

distress, and war, among them the failing health of his "mother" Janie Moore; his brother's return to active military service during wartime; food shortages and rationing; his own worsening rheumatism; and the sudden death of friend and Inkling Charles Williams. All the while, interestingly, Lewis was writing fiction with conspicuous attention to the recovery of damaged bodies and spirits.

Fiction. Lewis turned 41 on November 29, 1939, thus avoiding conscription, but his writing suggests deep concern about conflict and human fragility. In *Perelandra*, the protagonist Ransom uses his "middle-aged, sedentary body" to fight a demonic enemy on another planet. Ransom, like Lewis, and like Tolkien on whom the character is based, has memories of "very dangerous job[s] in the last war" and is aware that another one rages back on Earth – the Germans "may be bombing London to bits at this moment!" Wars past and present intrude on the fantasy.

The story culminates in a great battle between Ransom and the devilish Weston, a fight of good against evil. Ransom is victorious, but badly hurt. His injuries include a vicious bite to the foot (recalling humanity's struggle with the serpent in Genesis 3:15). This wound does not heal, but the rest of his body does, and "surprisingly quickly" when he enters an Edenic garden. Ransom rejuvenates, body and mind, in this sinless, new world. After returning home, an



astonished friend finds him “glowing with health and rounded with muscle and seemingly ten years younger,” despite the bleeding foot. Perelandra reverses the decrepitude and decay known back on Earth. In *That Hideous Strength*, Ransom appears a young man even though “nearer fifty than forty.” (Lewis turned 47 the year he published this book, Tolkien 53). It is a both/and situation, a paradox. Healed yet broken. Our frail bodies and minds are prone to all manner of emotional distresses, illnesses and injuries, and ultimately death, but in the most important sense, which is to say *spiritually*, the Christian sings, *It is well with my soul*.

Lewis struggled with his physical wounds in later years: “I’ve finished another book which concludes the Ransom trilogy,” he writes to a friend. He then adds in the very next sentence, *suggesting a connection with the story just mentioned, whether consciously or otherwise*, “I’ve had an operation for the removal of a piece of shell I got into me in the last war, which, after lying snug and silent like an unrepented sin for 20 years or so, began giving me trouble.” An interesting simile, one hinting that battle with a physical enemy (WWI) is somehow analogous with battling spiritual ones. Sometimes the enemy scores a blow (shrapnel, sin), and we suffer as a result.

Tolkien also writes about injuries sustained in war and the restoration of body and spirit. Thus spake loreth, wise-woman of Gondor, in *The Return of the King*, “The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known.” After Aragorn’s ministrations, Faramir opens his eyes, and says,

**“My lord, you called me. I come. What does the king command?”
‘Walk no more in the shadows, but awake!’
said Aragorn.”**

King Aslan in Lewis’s Narnia tales also heals the victims of war, as does Lucy. When Father Christmas distributes gifts in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he gives her a cordial: “If you or any of your friends is hurt [fighting the enemy], a few drops of this will restore them.”

Aslan secures Edmund Pevensie’s spiritual rescue, and when his body breaks in battle, Lucy’s cordial is at hand.

These writers infuse their fiction with an expansive sense of personhood, recognizing bodies, minds, and souls are susceptible to injury. Sometimes we recover, but sometimes not. Lewis finds relief from the damage caused by shrapnel (surgery) but is yet haunted by “the shadow” of the Great War. Éowyn recovers from the Black Breath, a spiritual wound, as does Faramir, who is to walk no more in “the shadows.” But whereas Frodo’s body mends, except for the piercings left by the Nazgûl’s blade and Shelob’s stinger, his spirit does not.

Faith. Without appealing to allegory to interpret these books, it is enough to suggest they *resemble* elements of the Christian story. Faith-inclined readers recognize in Tolkien’s returning king, who brings healing for a broken world, something of the Christian hope of Christ returning as king to wipe away every tear (Revelation 21:4). Father Christmas is one of the few overt references to Christianity in the Chronicles of Narnia. Like Tolkien’s Middle-earth, Narnia also has its share of war, trauma, illness, and death. The devout Roman Catholic Tolkien and the devout Anglican Lewis allow Christian longing for *ultimate* healing and restoration, even resurrection, to permeate their fantasies. Mere hints of the new heaven and the new earth to come. These soldiers’ stories about lingering scars and restored bodies and souls reflect deep faith. As they well know, Christ’s own resurrected body bore the scars of battle.



Michael Gilmour teaches at Providence University College. He is the author of *Eden’s Other Residents: The Bible and Animals* (2014) and *Animals in the Writings of C. S. Lewis* (2017).

The Inklings and the Artist Network

HANNAH FOULGER



*"In art, either as creators or participators, we are helped to remember some of the glorious things we have forgotten, and some of the terrible things we are asked to endure, we who are children of God by adoption and grace." – Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art**

The writing vocation can be lonely at the best of times, but writing in the time of coronavirus is downright isolating. Commiseration and comfort, which are necessary for surviving general life, are paramount for this time. Creating quality work is hard and requires a lot of you emotionally, intellectually, and, as the Inklings well knew, spiritually. As a graduate of the University of Winnipeg Creative Writing program, I've known for a long time that as much as a writer's work is done alone, it's done healthily with the support of friends who understand the toil of stringing words together to create meaning.

My friend Joel Robert Ferguson recently published a delightful book of poetry called *The Lost Cafeteria*. I was halfway through the book when I checked the back materials and saw my own name, along with several friends from our ad hoc writers group, listed in the acknowledgements included with those that influenced Joel or helped with his poems in any way. His gratitude was overwhelming and humble, especially given the quality of his poems.

This past year, I have had two artist groups that support me. I've drifted out of others over the years, but none so affecting as the writing community developed by Juice Journal, the University of Winnipeg's creative writing journal, in which I participated from 2012–2016. Since graduating from the University of Winnipeg, only two groups have brought me the consistent solace and artistic community as the saint benedict's table Artist Network and my

daily writing group developed out of Collegeville Institute.

The Artist Network

Started by Carolyn Mount when she was artist-in-residence at the church, the Artist Network is a group of artists from the community, including but not limited to writers, musicians, visual artists, poets, and crafters. Once a month we gather in someone's living room to demonstrate our work, drink wine, and share in artistic commiseration.

We've developed a form over the years, in which one person presents a project they have been working on, whether it is a piece of writing, music, visual art, or crafts, and the group responds, not with critique but a form of *Lectio Divina*. Which parts of the work energize us? What different meanings do we see? What do we relate to in the process of creation?

This has meant readings and responses of poetry, prose, memoir, and, in my case, drama. Members have presented music, comics, paintings, photography, and gallery shows. As a group, we've attended outings together, like when we visited Karen Corneilius' studio at Martha Street Studio and engaged not only in the work but the entire process.

Despite our differences, we have some key things in common, including understanding the work and drive of an artistic practice and the tenuous relationship between our faith and our art.

Having grown up in a charismatic Evangelical church, my experience of Christian art has not always been good. Craft and sophistication are often casualties of spiritual or emotional gains, and art seems to prioritize mission for the purpose of evangelizing non-Christians or disciplining Christians.

Those who care about the quality of art often shirk the label of "Christian" art or "Christian" writing, because they can cast

aspersions on the quality of our work and our serious commitment to it.

Can we be Christians and make Art with a capital A? Can we make morally complex art and be Christians? The collective “we” hope so.

Collegetown Dancing Writers

Collegetown Dancing Writers is a group that developed out of the “Apart and Yet A Part” writing retreat in which I participated at the Collegetown Institute along with nine other writers. Collegetown Institute is a retreat centre connected with St. John’s Abbey in Minnesota, which supports creative and cultural work through retreats, workshops, and residencies. Our program ran for 10 days. We could spend our days as we wished, writing, hiking the trails, attending the liturgy of hours, or doing anything that supported our work. In the evening, we would gather for dinner and conversation about writing, creativity, and spirituality.



Photo: Hannah Foulger

Hannah Foulger (front left) with the Collegetown Dancing Writers group.

After the retreat, a few of us committed to writing “together” every morning for an hour in the months that followed. Those of us that still participate say *hi* in our Facebook chat at 8:00 a.m. EST and then write for an hour. This early writing hour sets my day off right (or “write”). By engaging this artistic practice commitment, I get work done before anything else can take over my day, and I accomplish so much in that one hour (even if part of it is staring at the screen. This is necessary, too, as my friends would advise me.).

The morning hour is a key part of our commitment to each other, but like the Artist Network, the commiseration and support are

essential too. Some days we ask for each other’s advice about important topics, book queries, dealing with editors, and comma placement, but on others, we celebrate each other’s achievements and commiserate on setbacks.

Somehow, in this group, the label of “Christian” art isn’t a concern. Because we met during a workshop at Collegetown, our members of the Collegetown Dancing Writers include Angela O’Donnell, a poet and scholar of Flannery O’Connor’s faith and writing who teaches at Fordham University, and Deanna Williams, a jazz pianist, hymn writer, and scholar of Mary Lou Williams. They are not afraid of being labelled as Christ-followers, and they embrace it as key parts of their writing.

Like the Artist Network, faith connects us. In our group, we not only commit to writing daily, but we also commit to that in relationship with each other. These commitments are reflections of our relationship with God, who has, in a sense, ordained us in our vocations in one way or another. Early on, one of the Collegetown Dancing Writers members agreed that getting up every day to share this writing time together, albeit in different states and countries, was a time of Eucharist we share in together. The Artist Network is the same, albeit with actual wine instead of coffee.

I believe that as writers and artists, we have to come humbly to the work and to each other, as we would in the Eucharist. At saint ben’s, in the time before the coronavirus, we shared a common cup during Eucharist. No other experience has ever come close to that experience as my beloved artist groups. As we share in the common cup of the art, we are sublimated by the glory of God.



Hannah Foulger is a British Canadian theatre artist and writer. Her disability poetry has been published in Blue Mountain Press’ *Disabled Voices* anthology and performed in Sick + Twisted Theatre’s *Lame Is...* cabaret. Her plays *Clink* and *My Frozen Heart: A Comic Tragedy* have been produced at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival. She lives on Treaty 1 Territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Preaching *The Lord of the Rings*

GRAHAM MACFARLANE

Image: Jeff Finley

As a director at Manitoba Pioneer Camp, I gave a series of morning devotional table talks over the course of three summers based on *The Lord of the Rings*. Staff would act out a scene, and then I would give a short reflection based on it. The practice of reading Tolkien with a view to preaching to children was really tremendous fun. It's wonderful material for talking about Christian themes. While it's purposely unallegorical – there is no equivalent to the incarnation in Middle-earth – it *does* concern a world that needs saving, and an unseen divine force that saves it.

For my talks, I focused on a theme for each book of the trilogy: "Call" in *The Fellowship of the Ring*; "Faith" in *The Two Towers*; and "Freedom" in *The Return of the King*. The threefold pattern of call, faith, and freedom describes, in my view, both the overall shape of the salvation of Middle-earth and the trajectories of the individuals involved.

Call

The fellowship of the Ring is defined by its call and its task. At the formation of the fellowship

in Rivendell, Elrond says that they have been called there: "Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, stranger from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered." The fellowship is not bound together by any oaths, and its task is to participate in the redemption of a world threatened by encroaching enslavement. That is, the task is neither to escape Middle-earth to the Grey Havens, nor to hunker down in the various unspoiled bastions that provide them hospitality – Tom Bombadil's house, Rivendell, and Lothlorien.

The fellowship is also spiritually equipped to carry out its mission. A particularly clear example of this is the way that the Phial of Galadriel, a crystal that held the light of a star, comes to Sam's aid when he fights off Shelob the spider. It does not give him super-hobbit strength, but confirms and strengthens him – in fact it makes him more himself: "and he was Samwise the hobbit, Hamfast's son, again" (*The Two Towers*).

So too the community of God is called into

being, defined by its task, and spiritually equipped for that task. "You did not choose me; I chose you" (John 15:16) said Jesus to the disciples. And we are not called to seek to escape a general perdition by way of rapture,



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nor to carve out communities of purity within a sullied world, but to announce and participate in the redemption of this world. We live not by optimism, but by cold hard Christian hope, which, like the Phial of Galadriel, may lie dormant but then suddenly shine with the light of the resurrection, and make us most ourselves again.



Image: John Howe

Faith

Middle-earth is saved through a series of covenants that hold through adversity: the covenant of the fellowship of the Ring and the covenant of the old alliance between Rohan and Gondor, through personal allegiances, such as that of Pippin to the Steward of Gondor, and through personal loyalties, such as those between Gandalf and Faramir. The word “faith” comes up fairly often throughout all three books, and it always refers to keeping such covenants. It’s a matter of keeping, proving, or breaking faith. It’s not a matter of “having faith” in the sense of merely believing something to be the case. Faith means faithfulness.

The triumph of the fellowship and of Gandalf’s allied forces is the triumph of covenant faithfulness. Aragorn, at his coronation, says of Gandalf, “he has been the mover of all that has been accomplished, and this is his victory” (*The Return of the King*). Gandalf exercises his power and authority by building alliances, and by calling people to remain faithful to alliances.

In one sense, the fellowship ultimately fails when Frodo, at the supreme moment, breaks faith by betraying the fellowship’s task. But in

that moment it is his personal faithfulness to Gollum – not a member of the fellowship – that strangely saves the day, and in a most unanticipated way. In *The Two Towers*, Faramir had advised Frodo at the Forbidden Pool to ditch Gollum, and Frodo had answered, “I have promised many times to take him under my protection and to go where he led. You would ask me to break faith with him?” Frodo’s refusal to break faith with Gollum is mysteriously key to the mission’s completion.

So too the word “faith” in the New Testament is always covenantal in meaning – it refers to the covenant between God and God’s people, the covenant which is Jesus Christ. And so too the disciples fail Jesus, and the Church signally and continuously fails in its mission, and most pointedly, Judas betrayed Christ. Yet “if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13).

Freedom

The story concerns the redemption of the Middle-earth, that is, securing its freedom over the unfreedom of coercive and manipulative mastery.

The act of redemption, of movement from unfreedom to freedom, is perhaps most evident in King Théoden. In his first introduction in *The Two Towers*, Théoden is holed up in Meduseld, the Golden Hall, telling himself that he is free from commitments and ties, free to exercise power over his people, free to pursue self-interest and self-sufficiency. His information-diet is limited to the manipulative hissings of Wormtongue, who really serves Saruman (ultimately disloyally), who in turn really serves Sauron (ultimately disloyally). There is a whole chain of coercion and manipulation. The substance of the lies is, on the one hand, that the world is basically dark, menacing, and hopeless, and on the other hand, that Théoden is weak, helpless, and besieged.

Gandalf bursts into this prison of shadows like glorious day, exposing the lies and calling Théoden to remember his real self, strength, and commitments. He calls him to covenant



Image: Alan Lee

Sketch of Théoden and Wormtongue

faithfulness, to honour the old alliance between Gondor and Rohan. Finally, in *The Return of the King*, we see Théoden most gloriously free in the muster of Rohan on behalf of this covenant, “Ride now! Ride to Gondor!”, and supremely, in his final moments, “Up Eorlingas! Fear no darkness!” He is most free when he keeps those commitments he willingly entered.

Those who try to serve themselves, such as Wormtongue and Saruman, end up inadvertently serving an unworthy lord who rules through coercion and manipulation. Those who find freedom find it in serving a worthy lord. Gandalf, Frodo, and Aragorn are lords worth serving because they enact their lordship through service. Aragorn says of Gandalf, “He has passed through the fire and the abyss. We will go where he leads.”

So too, the gospel concerns the redemption of the world from its state of enslavement. And so too in this world, we foolishly seek our freedom by exercising mastery over others, while true freedom is found in service of the author of peace and lover of concord: “To serve you is perfect freedom” (*Book of Alternative Services*, Collect for Peace). And so too we have a captain who has passed through fire and the abyss, and we will follow where he leads us. He is a lord worth serving, for he exercises his lordship in serving us. “For we were called to freedom, brothers and sisters” (Galatians 5:13).

In short, I see in *The Lord of the Rings* the imprint of the basic shape of the gospel in the pattern of call, faith, and freedom. We are called in Christ, for Christ was first called; we are faithful in Christ, for Christ was first faithful; and we are free in Christ, for Christ was first free. This is the shape of the Christian life. And it is so because this is also the shape of the salvation of the world, through the election, covenant, faithfulness, and redemption of Jesus Christ.



Graham MacFarlane is a Pastoral Assistant at St. Margaret's Anglican Church.

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Parish News Roundup

Kreative Kids and St. Thomas, Weston

St. Thomas Anglican Church, Weston has withstood and evolved in its home community for over a century: serving in both worship and beyond; supporting other non-profit organizations; recognizing community service in the locals schools; hosting and contributing to Kreative Kids & Kitchens; and joining Care Portal. The COVID-19 situation has not only changed how we do things, but the needs of the community as well.

Food insecurity has increased in the neighbourhood, which we were already trying to address. In response, we have started providing free take out dinners to the community two nights a week; community members just need to sign up. We are also providing all the supplies needed for a kid's craft every meal and other activities as available to help keep kids busy. With some generous donations, we have been able to share some household and pantry items with our dinner guests.

In our first few weeks, we had approximately 30 families registered, totaling between 75 and 100 people at each dinner service. Our menu has included things like spaghetti and meat sauce, grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup, slow roasted ham with veggies, and shepherds pie. The kids have made minions, lanterns, and paper friends.

A Little More About Us...

Kreative Kids (2012) is a free, twice-a-week, art program that runs full-time during the school year and moves to summer programming when school lets out. It is a safe place where families can send their kids to socialize and let them

express themselves creatively. A healthy snack is provided each night and twice a month, on alternating Saturday evenings, we host Game Night and a Family Movie Night – popcorn and juice provided.

Kreative Kitchens Weston (2020) aims to address and answer two major needs with one act of giving. We provide a monthly free community meal and safe volunteer work experience for youth, youth in care, and/or anyone from within the vulnerable sector. This creates the opportunity to experience the joy and purpose of giving while increasing food security. Kreative Kitchens Weston is hoping to shift in a social enterprise direction, and is exploring a catering and paid work experience component.

If you would like to contribute to the work happening at St. Thomas and Kreative, financial and in-kind contributions are greatly appreciated.

Funds can be sent directly via e-transfer to st.thomas1567donations@gmail.com, by mail or through [Canada Helps](#). Any donations above \$20 will receive a tax receipt at the end of the year. For in-kind ideas please see our attached wish list and know that we are open to all kinds of gifts.

– *Cassandra Golondrina, People's Warden*

Website:

[St. Thomas, Weston](#)
[Kreative Kids](#)

Facebook:

[St. Thomas, Weston](#)
[Kreative Kids](#)



This page of the Parish News Round Up is sponsored by Richard Rosin. For more information, see his ad on page 9.

Nursing During a Pandemic

I retired from full-time nursing after 35 years of working at a large urban health care centre. Since that time, I have enjoyed nursing part-time in a clinic setting, where I use my skills in a minor treatment operating room and in a recovery room for endoscopy patients. In the last few months, I have worked more than usual because there is a need to do cancer screening diagnostics.

I wanted to be a nurse for as long as I could remember. I have been blessed with an almost 40-year career as a Registered Nurse. During training, I studied epidemiology, but studying about the Spanish Flu Pandemic in 1918 is vastly different from living it in 2020. Nothing could have prepared me for the last few months. There is nothing to prepare me for how long physical distancing and the many other restrictions that we are living with will last.

I have a renewed appreciation for nursing instructors, nurse educators, and infection control practitioners who have patiently over the years taught me the skills to do my job. Donning personal protective equipment (PPE) in a correct way can now be the difference between life and death. Not only for me, but for those around me, both patients, their families, and my family.

One of the key things emphasized in nursing was the value of modeling safe social practices. This means washing hands frequently, coughing into your sleeve, and staying home when not feeling well – the same messages that every Public Health Officer reminds us about daily on the news. But, it goes beyond that. There are so many things going on behind the scenes at work, from removing chairs from waiting rooms to provide two metres of physical distancing to re-imagining how to configure the clinic setting so that patients do not pass each other face-to-face when attending appointments. Being mindful of who touched what piece of equipment and not to touch it after someone else has used it. As of now, the current information is that the COVID-9 virus can live for up to 72 hours on hard surfaces. Not

to be an alarmist, but touching a pen, a keyboard, a computer mouse, a blood pressure machine, a door handle, a toilet seat can have serious consequences if someone infected with the virus has handled it. Not everyone has symptoms.

Nurses get lots of praise for being on the front lines. Thank you for that. But, there are so many front line workers that do not get the same recognition. Please be mindful and appreciative of them when you are doing the things that you need to do this week.

As I continue to model the “good” behaviour of a nurse, I believe I am modeling the behaviour of a follower of Christ. Prayer is especially helpful. I have a renewed appreciation of the countless things I take for granted: a job, a home, running water, and food on my table. Bishop Geoff has challenged us to write letters in support of Guaranteed Basic Income for all; have you written yours? I am more mindful about greeting those that I meet with a smile. A smile of appreciation is given to those that serve my many needs. Being a Christian is a journey that I travel gladly, but I am a work in progress.

My new philosophy is that I am not stuck at home, I am safe at home. I yearn to be with my family, but I do not want to put them at risk, so I will be physically distant. Telephone calls, texting, Skype, and FaceTime keep me connected with those that I love.

I do not fear for myself. I fear for my nurse colleague friends who work in acute, critical care, community care, and personal care facilities. May God be with them.

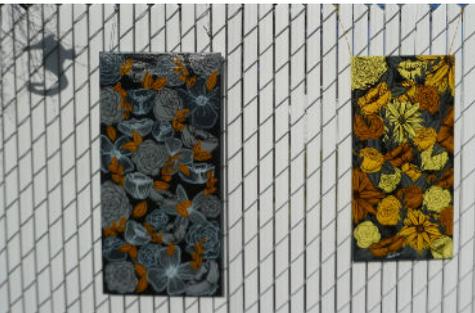
– Karen Terlinski, Registered Nurse

Outdoor Art Gallery

In March, Shirley Levacy, the owner of Great Blue Art Studio and a parishioner at St. Margaret's, Winnipeg, set up an outdoor art gallery on the fence surrounding her yard. [In an](#)

[article for CBC](#), she says, "I think art is a way to take a break from the stresses that we're dealing with. And to have some time of reflection and quiet to focus on things that are beautiful and lovely."

You can view some of the art pieces below.



The Silent Witness of Evergreens

RYAN TURNBULL

Photo: Frédéric Minne

If you have ever driven across rural south-west Manitoba, you might have noticed the odd clumps of evergreen trees punctuating the landscape. Depending on how ecologically aware you are, you may or may not realize that these trees do not really belong here. This part of the world is mostly covered with scrubby trees like poplar, oak, willow, and Manitoba maple. These occasional splotches of towering green are a sign, for those with eyes to see, that yards, and possibly people, are nearby.

Of course, these days if you get close to these clumps of trees, you are about as likely to find the ruined remains of a yard as you are of finding anybody actually living there. Yet for those of us who are familiar with these landscapes, these clumps of trees still recall the names and lives of the people that are attached to them. To the north of my parent's farm is the Jervis place – who, or what, a Jervis is, I have never known, but, according to my dad, they had a good toy cupboard. To the east is Oliver Lowe's, a neighbour who died years ago; I think somebody else lives there, but we do not know who. Finally, to the south-west is Barretts', though they moved to town over a decade ago. Each clump of trees continues to bear the presence of those who have long since been absented from the land.

My parents' farm, though still a working farm (and, during coronavirus, once again home to my entire family), is itself haunted by the presence of those long since departed. I am the fifth generation of Turnbulls to call this place home, and, if you pay close attention, there are traces of my absent ancestors all over. A clearing in a maple bush marks the place where my grandfather wintered cattle; some old fruit

trees mark where my grandparents' and parents' garden used to be. A pair of evergreen trees marks the spot where my great-grandparents cremated remains rest. A stone cairn at the end of our lane marks the names and dates of the generations, going back, husband and wife, to my great-great-grandfather's homesteading in 1883.

Walking around my family's farm, I can't help but echo the words of Jayber Crow in the eponymous novel by Wendell Berry, "I saw that, for me, this country would always be populated with presences and absences, presences of absences, the living and the dead. The world as it is would always be a reminder of the world that was, and of the world that is to come." For Berry's character, Jayber, the land is full of traces of the membership of the community. Fidelity to these presences and absences is essential for the well-being of the entire place.

The presence of absences crowds the landscape of the Western Manitoba prairies. Once again seeing these trees and remembering these names leaves me with a profound sense of grief for the communities and stories that have long since died or moved to the city. Where have they gone? In the wide expanse of the memories I have inherited from my family, these vacant bunches of trees are homes, lives, and stories.

But they are also something else. These trees are the silent witnesses of and against settler society, bringing with them the intentional silence of those countless untold bodies that were forcibly absented from the landscape. Where have they gone? Where are the buffalo? Where are the wagons of Red River Metis that once followed them? Where are the

Cree and Ojibway nations that once roamed these lands? Insofar as these trees vividly bring the presence of my absent settler community to mind, they also absent the presence of all those who stewarded the land for countless generations before. Those bodies that grew up with and fit this land have been replaced by neat rows of trees that do not.



The evergreens that mark where Ryan's great-grandparents are buried.

In recent years, it has become fashionable to begin public events with a land-acknowledgement ceremony. I have sat through many of these, some rote, some quite thoughtful, and some that were a mockery of the exercise as part of some corporate virtue-signalling strategy. But at their best, land acknowledgements are a chance for us to remember where we are in order to understand who we are and to whom we belong. If Berry is right – that the world that is, is always in a relationship with the membership of the world that was and the world that is to come – then we have a responsibility to acknowledge to whom we owe this world, the dead that precede us and those children who are yet to come.

Fundamentally, land acknowledgements are an exercise in training our memories to love.

In acknowledging where we are, we declare our membership in a web of relations that extends beyond ourselves in ways that exposes connections we may have missed. St. Augustine discovered long ago that learning to remember rightly was key to knowing God. In his *Confessions*, Augustine remembers his life, discovering along the way those whose love held him and shaped him. Along the way, he realizes that his membership in their love is a function of the love God has for all of God's creatures. As Jeffrey Bilbro says in "The Ecology of Memory," "Augustine believes that humans can gain a foretaste of the final restoration of creation. Thus, for Augustine, the highest use of the faculty of memory is prayer: *Confessions* is his life remembered as a prayer of repentance and restoration."

It seems to me that, for us, well-done land acknowledgements can be prayers of repentance and restoration. Every time they are done, we remember our membership in the web of creaturely relationships that constitute the places in which we live and move and have our being. Fidelity to the membership is long work, patiently undertaken. Elders often say that it took seven generations to arrive at where we are today, and it will take seven generations to undo the harms that were done.

Acknowledging the land and its various presences and absences is the first step in committing ourselves in loving fidelity to all fourteen of those generations in the hope that here, in the land the Creator has given as pure gift, we might just discover a foretaste of a restored creation, one where clumps of evergreen trees point to the presence of *all* peoples in God's beloved creation.



Having grown up on a cattle ranch in western Manitoba, Ryan Turnbull has a deep interest in the intersection of theology, ecology, place, and friendship. He is currently pursuing a PhD in theology at the University of Birmingham in Birmingham, U.K., focusing on Christian theologies of place.