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

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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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That's how the light gets in

Photo:
Ehud Neuhaus

The Anglican Church of Canada has experienced no shortage of challenges since the COVID 19 pandemic began. Not only have our leaders had to radically re-imagine worship for a digital space or else risk losing members, but our society's increasingly polarized political landscape has exposed serious cracks within our church as an institution. In the face of past and, indeed, present abuses of power, clergy and lay leaders are urgently called to reform and advocate for systemic change, while still protecting the sacred symbols and ceremonies that house the Christ-centred theology of the Anglican faith.

The tension is palpable, but I think it's an exhilarating time to be a member of the church. Though the current tensions exposed in the institution point to its brokenness, their existence is nothing new; the church has always been, in its most visceral sense, a house for a broken body.

There's a popular Leonard Cohen lyric that, by no accident, keeps coming up in sermons in my own parish, "There is a crack, a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in." The idea is that the church is flooded with "light" only because it's full of "cracks," which are the windows to healing and new life.

But what does hope and healing look like within the church, and specifically in the ACC, in our present moment?

May's issue, tied together under the theme of "Fissures," ventures into this conversation.

RLN Reporter at Large Hannah Foulger dives into the *Safe Church Charter of the Anglican Communion*, examining what the policy means and how we, in our church communities, might move forward when faced with internal violence, discrimination, and sexual abuse.

Susan Smandych of St. Paul's Fort Garry also examines Anglican church policy in the *Charter for Racial Justice in the Anglican Church of Canada*. Smandych argues that anti-racism programming does not go far enough, and she raises a crucial next step of addressing the role of white privilege in perpetuating racial injustice in our institution.

Sandwiched between these reviews on policy is a feature on another kind of broken body. Within the Lenten season, I had the opportunity to interview a former neighbour of mine and fellow member of St. Margaret's Anglican Church. Norman Schmidt is a gifted visual artist whose life radically changed overnight when he woke up one morning in 2008 and couldn't hear out of his left ear. He began suffering attacks of vertigo and was eventually diagnosed with a degenerative disease. Schmidt is now physically unable to leave his home, but, with a still-sharp mind he collaborates with his wife, Sharon, to create new works of art (he comes up with the vision and she makes it happen). His story is a testament to the broken bodies we suffer as humans, but also the beauty and hope that can emerge from this brokenness. Indeed, to be part of the Body of Christ is to experience our wounds, and yet live in the promise of wholeness. "This world is a place of ugliness and suffering," Schmidt said to me, "...and it is into this reality that Christ came."



Sara Krahn is the editor of Rupert's Land News.

A Window of Opportunity

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: [Gianandrea Villa](#)

Our RLN theme for May's issue, "Fissures," is something that I am both immensely thankful and dutifully concerned about as I sense society turning yet another corner in the pandemic saga.

I am concerned that we have come to an abrupt end of restrictions amidst the very-present pandemic. I am concerned that we as a North American society have generally been living a dream of privilege and moderate luxury far too long; and that is causing us to make demands of one another, find fault with one another, and erode the interdependence we have, not only with each other but with the entirety of creation. I fear that a new normal may be established that we in the Body of Christ may be forced to adhere to, which may obscure how we hear, see, and respond to God and to one another.

In short, I believe there is a distinct possibility that the Church will have only a finite window of opportunity with which to regroup those who are lost after these last two years of isolation. It will be difficult for many who have not participated in the changing environment of digital and in-person gathering to catch-up and engage fully. It will be difficult for the presently engaged to patiently seek-out, pray-with, and bring back the lost and fearful.

God's call is for us to live-out the parable (Matt 18.12-14) of the Shepherd and the 100 sheep; but let us keep in mind the profound joy and celebration that there shall be in discovering the one that was lost.

I am indeed most thankful for some renewed but cautious freedoms to travel, meet, and greet. I am also deeply grateful for the numerous lessons learned through the last two years. I will not try to rehearse them all but will highlight the resiliency and adaptability of many disciples; your strength, determination, and skills have shone through a very dark and uneasy context. Your ability to continue and flourish in your call to ministry and mission is fabulous. Several parishes have even grown despite the pandemic.

I am thankful that we could support local, provincial, and federal governments with our communications and adherence to health orders; along with this I am grateful that the CEWS (Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy) program served many parishes—perhaps we need to state our gratitude to the various governments.

We are most fortunate and grateful that God has exposed cracks in the general system, and in our institution. But what is God calling us to now carry forward? Surely, it is the faith commended to us to share in God's world, Jesus' story, gratitude, and the great joy in God with us. What is God calling us to leave behind? Surely, it is whatever prevents us from moving forward in faith.

I think God is calling the Church to re-imagine itself in a world that has radically changed in two short years, and within a context of slow change over fifty years. Now seems like the perfect time to engage all disciples in reckoning God's call to the Church.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Open, accessible, and Safe Church

HANNAH FOULGER



Photo: Sara Krahn

Last month, the Anglican Church of Canada was rocked by the resignation of Rev. Mark MacDonald, national Indigenous archbishop. This comes at a time when members of the ACC, both nationally and at the diocesan level, are working to develop and implement Safe Church policies for our members. It's necessary for these policies to be in place to respond to allegations, prevent further harm, and to respond in a way in keeping with our calling to live like Christ.

"The power of the Gospel is so easily warped. The power of the gospel and the power of what we wield is for truth, beauty, good and right, relationship and justice in the world," Rev. Eileen Scully, the Director of Faith, Worship and Ministry for General Synod, says.

"Sometimes these Earthen vessels can warp what is so good into powerful destructive evil, a power that creates residential school systems and maintains white supremacy," Scully says. "We need standards that hold us, correct us. We need continually be formed and reformed and to check our own behaviours."

Internationally

Anglicans worldwide have recognized the need for policies that protect and fight against such evils. The Anglican Safe Church Commission was established by request of the Anglican Consultative Council in 2016, at their meeting in Lusaka, Nigeria. This international body is made up of clergy representation from

165 countries, including Rev. Mary Wells from Canada, a social worker and special witness to cases of abuse in the church. The group aims to promote the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. During the first phase of the ASCC in 2016-2019 reviewed the safeguarding policies currently in place and developed new international guidelines. In 2019, these guidelines were approved by the Anglican Consultative Council. These guidelines focused on five points:

- Providing support where there is abuse
- Implementing effective responses to abuse
- Adopting and promoting standards for the practice of Ministry
- Assessing suitability for ministry
- Promoting a culture of safety

In the ACC, adoption of these victim-centred standards emphasizes pastoral support along with effective policies and procedures in response to allegations of sexual misconduct. With these victim-centred supports in mind, Wells and Scully reviewed diocesan policies in 2018-2019 and drew up a report card which was delivered to each diocese. Quebec scored among the highest and the northern dioceses, along with Rupert's Land, scored on the low end.

Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Diocese of Rupert's Land installed their first sexual misconduct policy in the early 90s. At that time the diocese created the position of Pastor for Healthy Communities. This position not only included responding to allegations of sexual misconduct but also bullying and abuse of power within parishes. Our current Pastor for Healthy Communities, Mary Holmen, was appointed by Don Phillips and reappointed by Bishop Geoff.

When Holmen was appointed, she recognized that the diocesan policy for abuse and bullying needed revisions, as it was confusing and full of redundancies. She attempted to make it as user friendly as possibly, reframing the power dynamic to be in the hands of the complainants. When reviewed by a human rights/employment lawyer, however, she learned that the policy was missing a Respectful Workplace policy which is required by Manitoba law. When reviewed again, a section on protection and safety of children and vulnerable adults was removed to focus on sexual misconduct, harassment, exploitation, and abuse, instead making it its own policy. The charter of the ACSS has been adopted for the Diocese of Rupert's land but the Rupert's Land specific policy is still under review to make it work as best as possible.

"The vision for a safe church policy is that we need to make the church a place of safety for everybody, where everybody is treated with dignity and respect. The policy should also cover other misconduct which is not sexual in nature, such as bullying and misuse of social media, as well as guidelines for children and youth programming, as well as elder abuse," Holmen says. "The respectful workplace policy covers people who work for the church, either paid or volunteer, but the safe church policy would be for participants and recipients of ministry."

Holmen would particularly like the Safe Church Policy to influence people who are active in the church, and to provide them with ongoing awareness of potential harm. "The reality is that



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sometimes we hear each other. We need ways of dealing with and preventing that.”

One of the ways forward is to make sure the reviewed policy is easily accessible to anyone in the diocese. Scully says,

“One of the critical things that the Safe Church Commission talks about that is standard, good procedure, is that a diocesan policy and avenues for complaints ought to be really easy to find on a diocesan website. If you can’t find it, that’s an indication of problems in the system.”

The church of England has produced some accessible, easy to find resources, both in parishes and online about spotting abuse of power in the church, what to do when someone has experienced misconduct, and how to proceed. Scully says that parishes should have notices posted to indicate they have signed onto the safe church charter.

At the centre of all this policy development and dissemination, Scully says, should be the theological foundation. “People of faith are called to right relationship with each other. Rules and policy matter, but it’s not going to get into our souls. As rules of behaviour, it needs to be preached, it needs to be lived, it needs to be rooted in our Gospel.” Scully says. “There’s a

clause that says we will adopt and promote by education and training standards for the practice of pastoral ministry and other church personnel, which means integrating safe church training as part of formative theological education. That is the responsibility of the diocese and the theological college.”

Mary Holmen and the rest of the working group at Rupert’s Land are working to develop an effective Safe Church policy which reflects the Gospel to which we are all called.

“We are all created in the divine image. When a person is harmed, whether it’s sexual violation or other kinds of harm, it’s a violation of that underlying image. A child of God is deserving of love and care, and one who has been abused has been treated in ways that are not consistent with that,” Holmen says. “So we’ve failed in our calling. We’re supposed to care for one another. Speaking the truth in love means calling others to account. That’s who we’re called to be as church: to care for the weakest and most vulnerable.”

If you are experiencing or are aware of sexual misconduct within the Diocese of Rupert’s Land, you can contact Mary Holmen, the Pastor for Healthy Communities at 204.453.3279

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Hannah Foulger is the Reporter/Writer at Large for Rupert’s Land News. She is a disabled British Canadian writer and theatre artist. She is currently an MFA candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Guelph in Toronto.



On beauty and illness: an interview with Norman Schmidt

Photo: [Zuzana Kacerová](#)

Norman Schmidt has lived a full life. In the early 2000s, he retired from a career in professional design and teaching in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he and his wife, Sharon, currently live. They have also spent a portion of their lives residing in rural Southern Manitoba, where Norman (and Sharon) grew up and where his interest in all things beautiful began. (As a matter of fact, Norman and Sharon's farm in Kleinstadt was just three miles north up the dirt road from where I grew up.)

Norman completed his undergraduate studies in art at the University of Manitoba, and further honed his interests in graduate school at the University of Alberta under the mentorship of Swiss master printer Peter Bartl, earning a Master of Visual Art Degree. Norman's passion for melding art and other ideas led him, over

the course of his life, to explore interdisciplinary forms of expression, namely in the literary and visual arts. Over the years, his ideas have been realized as prints (in the book arts), quilts, and kites.

In 2008, Norman began experiencing the first symptoms of a neurological illness that would gradually take over his life, making it near impossible for him to live and do his work as he was once able to do. I visited Norman and Sharon in their apartment in Osborne Village, where they have lived since 2016. Norman spoke to me at length about his life, his illness, his involvement with St. Margaret's Anglican Church, and finally, the way he sees beauty and ugliness in the context of the Christian faith.

— Sara Krahn

SK: Can you tell me, as concisely as possible, where you are from and what your upbringing was like?

NS: Well, there's no concise answer because life is not concise. My upbringing was not Mennonite. Even though my family lived in a Mennonite community (the village of Old Altona) and my name is Mennonite; we spoke German. When I was young and just at the edge of my memory, my family left the Mennonite Church, because my father disagreed with some of its practices. My father was brought up a few miles east of Gretna, in the Edinburgh church, which no longer exists. It's now the Gretna Bergthaler Church (where my parents met). After they were married, they began attending the Bergthaler Church in Altona, but for some reason my father had a ministry in the Mennonite Brethren Church, who insisted he be re-baptized in accordance with their method, leading eventually to our family leaving the Mennonites altogether because my parents disagreed with needing to be baptized a second time. My family believed in one baptism. So, my father and our family joined a breakaway church from Anglicanism (which some call the Plymouth Brethren), and only retained a few of the 39 articles from the Anglican Church and none of the Prayer Book and its liturgy. Our gathering was really a very small group, just our family and another family. And we gathered every Sunday morning in our living room around a square table covered in white linen draped to the floor. On it were just three items—a loaf of bread, a goblet of wine, a small square box covered in dark green velvet with a slot for the offering. There, in a simple service of scripture readings, some exposition, singing, and prayer the baptized shared in communion. For this my mother would always bake a special small loaf of bread (Saturday was baking day). In hindsight, this was a kind of contemplative service; an ascetic aesthetic. There were long silences (at least they felt long to me as a child) and the sole focus was on the salvific nature of Christ's crucifixion, of Christ

giving His full self for our full self. It was impressed on me that this was very important. For my entire upbringing, there were always two things that were asked of me: Read your Bible and pray. I was given no instruction on how or why, but my mother would remind me every day before I went to bed, up until I was a teenager. As I matured, its merits were affirmed, reading J. I. Packer, an Anglican scholar who stressed in his writings the importance of knowing and praying continually to and communing with the triune God in Word written and word spoken and Holy Communion.

SK: How did you come to be a member of St. Margaret's?

NS: After Sharon and I were married, for a time we continued with the church group from my upbringing. But it became evident after a while that the group was erring in some ways. For instance, they required headdress from women, taking it as a "forever" biblical injunction. Sharon objected to this. She had grown up in the EMMC in Winkler and didn't understand this policy. This was also the 1960s / early '70s, and we got caught up with the sub-cultural rejection of conventional values of that time. Sharon and I did a lot of camping around this time, in the Whiteshell; the forest was our "church." But by the time we were in our 30s, we realized we were missing something in our religious lives. I'm not exactly sure how it came about that we started attending St. Margaret's, probably hearing of it by word-of-mouth. It was the first liturgical church that we had ever gone to. Before that we tried some non-denominational churches, where there was little to no communion. We were looking for a church more focused on Christ. At the time, I was also reading various literature written by Anglicans. I was working as a professor at the University of Manitoba, and I would park North of St. John's College and walk through the College every day. St. John's Chapel had a book rack just outside, and occasionally I would stop by and leaf through some of the documents.



Drawing: *state of life and death*

Norman's note: *it is striking to see how the cycle of life is everywhere in evidence in the boreal forest, with seedlings sprouting amongst the mature trees, and aging barely alive trees, and the dead giants*

pen & ink, crayon, 9 x 12 inches, 1980s

SK: Who were some of the authors that you encountered on this book rack?

NS: John Stott, and J.I. Packer (Professor of Theology at Regent College, UBC), and Michael Green were referenced. I bought their books and read exactly the stuff that was missing in my heart. I also had an abridged Anglican prayer book that I began using for my evening prayer. And Sharon and I began reading C.S. Lewis, who drew us further towards Anglicanism. We started attending St. Margaret's in the late 1980s, right before David Widdicombe became the rector. I remember that David was a very good organizer, discerning preacher and erudite teacher, and a very astute observer of people's gifts and abilities. He had a unique gift in that way.

SK: Did you feel motivated towards your gifts through your involvement with the parish?

NS: Yes, certainly. For many years I assisted with communion once per month or more. And in the early years Sharon and I prepared sandwiches that people brought for after-service "fellowship" downstairs. I also helped with an annual art show at St. Margaret's, in the 1990s. The whole sanctuary was transformed for one day. I was a kite-maker and had a large collection of kites. Almost 100. Along with other artworks, some of these I displayed at St. Margaret's. They've all been donated now to the schools (in Altona).

SK: I'm wondering if you could comment on what it's like to be a senior member of a parish, but also the experience of not being physically active in a parish where you were once a very active member.

NS: This has been a very difficult thing, hard to talk about, because of my illness causing me to be away from the church family I had grown to love. The church must now come to me.

SK: Could you describe your illness?

NS: It's a very complicated illness and it prevents me from doing anything physically. It's been a very gradual loss of physical function. Sharon and I have lived in this apartment off Osborne since 2016, when I could still get around, but we were never able to attend St. Margaret's together in that time. Once, just prior, after not having been able to commute from the country for a time, I just screwed up my courage and said, we need to go. I've been too ill since.

To describe the illness, I must go back to 2008. That's when I had my first attack. I woke up one morning and I had no hearing in my left ear. It just happened over night and has not returned. Shortly thereafter, I had my first attack of vertigo. To describe vertigo to someone who has never experienced it is difficult. The closest I can come to describing it is like this: imagine spinning yourself around 20 times and trying to remain upright. That's the initial experience of vertigo. It's completely unprovoked by anything. There's no forewarning. You could be brushing your teeth, doing anything at all. It's very dangerous to actually go anywhere. You

drop like an empty sack and are plastered to the ground. Suddenly, as it intensifies gravity has ten times the strength it normally has. This is because the part of the inner ear that normally deals with gravity is sending the wrong signal to the brain. Initially, it was diagnosed as Meniere's Disease in the left ear. I would have a vertigo attack every second or third day, and they would last anywhere from 6-18 hours, and I would go into this weird trance where reality passed over me. I would be in this strange, swirling world, sick as a dog.



Norman in his private printing studio in Altona, Manitoba

Anyway, we left our farm in 2008 and moved to the town of Altona. We had a studio built onto the house and I thought, it would be easier this way. Then my symptoms worsened. I couldn't focus and concentrate. I couldn't hold my tools. This degenerative disease, atypically, developed in my right ear also. My ear specialist then sent me to a neurologist and had dozens of MRIs done. The neurologist said she didn't know what was going on in my brain. The brain was abnormal in that it had areas of atrophy in both cerebrum and cerebellum/brainstem—something you would see in a 90-year-old, but

at the time I was still only in my 60s. Finally, one of the MRIs showed what she was looking for related to my symptoms, indicating a second disease: Hypertrophic Olivary Degeneration. The two olivary glands in the base of the cerebellum (which control much of the neural communication with your brain), were swollen. Their malfunction affects speech, hearing, balance, vision, taste, fine motor control, and swallowing. Medication does, thankfully, alleviate some symptoms a bit. My vision remains affected by something called oscillopsia, specifically see-saw oscillopsia, where one eye goes up and one goes down. I still struggle with this, and it makes it very difficult to read because lines will start blurring and overlapping. I feel dizzy and woozy all the time. But I've actually tried to work this into my artwork.

SK: Tell me about that. How has your illness influenced your artwork, your artistic practice, your life as a maker of things?

NS: Well, many things converge. There's the fact that God has allowed this in my life. Why? Every person who gets sick who is a Christ follower will ask: why? There is no answer. Whether there will ever be an answer, I don't know. It's probably better we don't know now. Then, in the convergence, my verbal/visual consciousness has sharpened. I have always been a typographer, and visual art for me has always involved words. But illness has made me rethink some things. When I was teaching in the late 1990s, something new was happening in the world and society. There was a paradigm shift in the culture. Art became ephemeral, non-aesthetic, in stark contrast to my being a maker of objects that might evoke a sense of beauty. I recall the work of a photographer and filmmaker, Edward Burtynsky. He was doing large-scale prints of the destruction that we have done to the earth. But the way he presented this destruction was beautiful. Beauty in ugliness. Beauty to me has always been very important. (Which was one of the things that attracted us to St. Margaret's. The beauty of the liturgical service.)



A linocut proof print and a page spread from Norman Schmidt, *Monarchs, Milkweed, Oyamel Fir Trees*, letterpress book, linocuts (tipped in), hand sewn signatures, canson paper, hand binding in cloth over boards, 24 pp, 2010

Taking a step back. When I was an undergraduate art student, the word beauty was taboo. You couldn't speak it. Art was no longer about making beauty through craft; in fact, art was about nothing I thought it was going to be. It was about expressing one's egoistic self, which to me seemed a terribly selfish enterprise. Its egotism more than puzzled me; I almost quit art school because of this philosophical difference. I thought art for art's sake was the most devilish thing you could do; an effrontery. I did not and still do not agree with that premise for making art.

I wanted to make things that others could engage with in an enduring aesthetic. But ugliness, is, in fact, a necessary collateral to beauty. In fact, you would not know beauty unless you had ugliness. Just as you do not know wellness unless you have been ill.

These are the things that have been deliberately created by God to be part of the human experience. This world is a place of ugliness and suffering, a place Martin Luther

said was in the sway of sin, death, and the devil, "the unholy trinity," and it is into this reality that Christ came. He came as a suffering servant; a thing of great beauty for those who see it and feel it—love and sorrow mingled. And this was impressed on me when I was very young.

But in the art world of the 90s, ugliness for its own sake suddenly became celebrated; its ugliness existed solely to be precipitously neutral, without aesthetic purpose. It made me think of some artworks from history. Of Matthias Grünewald's (1480-1528) *Crucifixion*. It's probably the most grotesque image of the crucifixion ever. It was done for St. Anthony's hospital, where patients were being treated for painful skin diseases. Grünewald thought that if he could make this piece as ugly as these people were feeling, it might lift the spirits of the patients, and show them that Christ suffered in the same way they were suffering in the beauty of empathetic symbolism.

I now work in terms of broader philosophical/religious symbolisms. Beauty and ugliness have coalesced, becoming juxtaposed layers of meaning in my art—maybe it's my



Typoem: 5 red wounds
Norman's note: *this image came to me during a most violent vertigo attack imaginable, when i saw swirling in my trance-like state the five wounds of christ, spinning cut paper + stitching (paper quilt), 14 x 14 inches, made in about 2009*

return to 60s thinking, risking being misunderstood.

I think of Maundy Thursday, a day focused on misunderstandings: The disciples of Jesus once argued amongst themselves about who was the greatest. On this day at evening meal their Master poignantly punctuates their dispute by taking the place of a slave and washing their filthy, dirt and dung encrusted feet, saying that, "now I have given you an example." A symbol. Then he confounds the ordinary meal; turns it into the greatest of symbols.

Symbolism like this is so important. In your own imagination, the symbol comes alive. The symbol prompts you to think and imagine. To grow. The well-worn symbol is what drives communication. And this is the essence of religious experience. And that's where beauty comes in.

In experiencing beauty, you experience something numinous, a God-experience. And people who have no religious thought in their body can suddenly also have this numinous experience, first described by religious thinker,

Rudolf Otto, which psychoanalyst Carl Jung later explained as God giving humans a "nod" through the non-rational in the idea of the Divine and its relation to rational human existence.

The first time I had this experience came when I flew a kite. I was standing out in a field looking at this kite, and suddenly the whole sky and clouds and scenery became so overwhelmingly beautiful. I could hardly stand it; it was such a beautiful ecstatic experience.



Airborne swallow kite,
synthetic paper over a wooden dowel frame
about 40 x 36 inches, 1990s



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Examining White Privilege in the Anglican Church

SUSAN SMANDYCH

Photo: [Matt Artz](#)

Within Christianity, scripture prompts us to respond to oppression and injustice; for example, Isaiah 58:6 asks us to consider “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?” and Micah 6:8 clearly highlights that the Lord requires us to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” In today’s world, we are inundated with headlines and stories of oppression and injustice, which are often related to racism. Within the Body of Christ, we are called to respond to oppression and injustice, including racism, at an individual and institutional level. At an individual level, we make a lifelong commitment to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being” in our baptismal covenant. At an institutional level, the church has made a public commitment to eliminate racism, through *A Charter for Racial Justice in the Anglican Church of Canada*, which collectively promises that:

As members of the Anglican Church of Canada, we strive continuously to be faithful to our life in Jesus Christ that we embraced at our baptism. We are learning that one of our strengths as a church lies in our diversity and in our commitment to eliminate systemic and individual racism, whether intended or not. We are called to be a church where people will have the assurance that they will be treated with dignity and respect, and where they will find a community that is determined to be free of racism.

This Charter was approved by the Council of General Synod (CoGS) in March 2007 and endorsed by General Synod in June 2007 as its official anti-racism statement. However, it has since been recognized that despite the church’s commitment to anti-racism, racialized persons (clergy and laity) continue to experience systemic racism within the Anglican Church of Canada. In 2020, there was an intentional effort by the church to renew its commitment to grapple with ongoing systemic racism through the establishment of a national ‘Dismantling Racism Task Force’. During the March 2022 CoGS meeting, this Task Force presented its draft recommendations (available [here](#)). During the CoGS discussion of the recommendations, a hope was expressed that the church would adequately promote participation in anti-racism programming not just at the national level, but the Diocesan level. (Prior to these recommendations in 2022, in his Charge to Synod 2020, Bishop Geoff Woodcroft had called for decisive action within the Diocese of Rupert’s Land against all forms of discrimination, including racism. In response, the “Noon Day prayers and Conversations Dismantling Anti Black Racism” committee was established and subsequently provided recommendations to the Bishop in Spring 2021.)

But is anti-racism programming enough to finally dismantle racism within the church as a whole, and within the Diocese of Rupert’s Land itself? And what may have limited the church from dismantling racism up until now?

Diana Swift, in her review of the book

[“Cracking Open White Identity towards Transformation”](#)

quotes an assertion in the book’s foreword that “dissection of white privilege is a fundamental requirement for the success of anti-racism efforts [since] it is impossible to do anti-racism work without examining white identity and the unearned power and privilege that flow from that identity.”

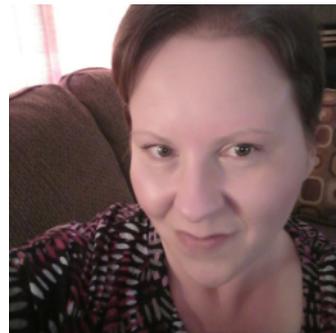
Based on this assertion, I discerned the following hypothesis for an MDiv dissertation, in an attempt to understand why progress on dismantling systemic racism in the church has been limited: “There is a passive, persistent presence of white privilege within the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC)—and a lack of awareness, acknowledgement, and/or action to address such white privilege is inherently limiting the ACoC’s commitment to the Charter for Racial Justice, and thus its ability to dismantle systemic racism.” To test this hypothesis, over 1000 entries associated with journal articles and official statements published between June 2007 and December 2020 were examined in the General Synod Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada, to look for evidence of white privilege.

Findings were categorized into six key areas:

1. Assumption of British norm (i.e., white people see their views as normal, central, and rational),
2. Visual imagery (e.g., prevalence of white Church leaders in stained glass windows),
3. Tone and language (e.g., assumption of homogeneity of racialized persons, and sense of ‘otherness’),
4. Denial of racism (e.g., ‘Letters to the Editor’ in the Anglican Journal ardently denying systemic racism exists, and defense of residential schools’ intent/impact, and the Doctrine of Discovery),
5. Limited momentum (e.g., time lag between General Synod commitment to Charter for Racial Justice and Diocesan action e.g., anti-racism training), and
6. Representation and voice (e.g., key criteria of those elected or appointed to Standing Committees does not include racial diversity).

Based on evidence of white privilege in the Church, perhaps anti-racism programming may not be enough to dismantle racism; perhaps efforts also need to be made to raise the awareness of, and address, white privilege. As theologian Nathan Todd notes, there is a “positive association between greater awareness of white privilege and greater racial justice action.” So what could we do within the Diocese of Rupert’s Land, to increase awareness of white privilege, to seek greater racial justice? During this Eastertide, as we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ and God’s love for humanity, perhaps we could revisit our commitment to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being” and consider:

- Examining the extent of one’s own privilege using a self-assessment tool such as the [‘ladder of empowerment’](#), the key focus of which is to help white people understand their identity and privilege within a racist society, and to replace it with a positive, anti-racist identity
- Participating in [‘My Work To Do’](#) online affinity group which provides opportunities to learn about white privilege, its indicators and implications
- Exploring the imagery, norms, language and tone used in a parish, and ask, “Who is not here in this community of faith from the broader parish, and what prevents them from joining us? Who holds the power, and what perspectives are missing when decisions are made?”



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