



## A Word From Our Bishop



The Rt. Rev'd William G. Cliff  
Bishop of Brandon

**H**oly Week and Easter, which are only days away, come at a time in the church year when the stories are packed with emotional power. There are several points in the story between Palm Sunday and Easter that can deepen me down to silence, and even conjure tears. The story we tell of the Lord, who loved us so much, and who was so cruelly treated ought to be enough to move us to tears, and if to tears, then on to repentance.

Over the many years I have presided at Holy Week and Easter services, I have seen others moved as well. I can remember very ordinary Sundays transformed by the power of the story of Jesus and his love - and very ordinary people being moved as if hearing the story for the first time. Somehow, after a lifetime of singing hymns and reading scripture, attending church and listening to sermons, even the most hard-scramble farmers and city folk have found themselves overwhelmed by the simple beauty of the grief, sorrow and love that the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus can inspire.

Along with this overwhelming story of God's redeeming love come the tears which are a gift from God. Whether it is a favourite hymn, or the simple truths of the gospel plainly presented, we find our eyes misting. It could be the memory of those we miss, who sat with us in our pews in former days. It could be the yearning for the kingdom that God has promised in the Lord Jesus Christ and the desire to see that kingdom born amongst us. Or maybe its just the tune of a favourite hymn combined with the memory of a loved one's voice, now silent - but singing in the heavenly choirs.

Some folks get embarrassed when God breaks in and their eyes betray them with tears. They apologize to me when it happens - either moved by the liturgy, the message, the music or even the sermon. People sometimes squirm and wish that God did not have such a hold on them, or that their heart was not so tender. I always remind them that in the story of Jesus, tears are a gift. There is nothing to be ashamed of when we are overwhelmed by the depth of human need, or how far God went to meet that need.

I understand emotional reserve. I understand it all too well. I am naturally reserved and others have interpreted that reserve as being aloof or disapproving. It's not the case - I have even known emotionally reserved people, like me, who are unafraid of tears, either in others or themselves. God loves us at our worst, not only at our

best. When we are reminded that it is the broken and contrite heart that the Lord will not despise, we are suddenly drawn back into the deeper truth that we keep getting backwards: God loves us before we know it. God loves while we are sinners. God loves us not because we are perfect, but because we need His perfection.

It is a deeply liberating thing to realize that God's love is not contingent on our good behaviour or our willingness to appear to be "well put together". Our greater challenge is to make the church the kind of place that people seek when they need to let go of their tears, to lament and grieve and cry - as well as the place they go to celebrate and sing their Easter alleluias. As we renew the church in Brandon, let's all keep in mind that this isn't about becoming something that God will love. God already loves us. Who we are and what we become is the testament to that love which transforms us. The renewal of the church is rooted in the willingness to proclaim to those who think they will never be ready, never be good enough or never believe well enough that there is room for them too. There is room for us at our worst, and knowing that we can be our best.

### The Mustard Seed

*Publisher:*

The Rt. Rev'd William G. Cliff

*7th Bishop of Brandon*

*Editor (and Secretary of Synod):*

The Rev'd Matt Koovisk

[mustardseed@brandon.anglican.ca](mailto:mustardseed@brandon.anglican.ca)

*Mail:* The Tri-Valley Parish,

c/o Box 15, Virden, MB, R0M 2C0

*Phone:* 204-748-1379 (OFFICE)

The Mustard Seed is circulated ten times a year (from September to June), as a section of the Anglican Journal, to all supporting households in the Diocese of Brandon.

Contributions to the expense of the paper are normally requested each March but donations are accepted anytime. Changes of address can be made through your parish or directly with the Anglican Journal. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Bishop or of the editor.

**Deadline for submissions:** the first of the month. *Please note:* All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, timeliness, appropriateness, or length. Submit writing to the Editor in Microsoft Word file format or in the body of an email. Photographs must be large, high resolution jpg files. Please ensure you have permission from parents or guardians of all minors who have their photos or names published in The Mustard Seed. If including a photo, please send a name of who took the photo along with it, so the Editor can give proper credit!

Don't forget to check out our Facebook page! Search "The Diocese of Brandon" on Facebook, or go to <http://www.facebook.com/brandonanglicans>

You can find an electronic copy of the Mustard Seed there each month, as well as photos from recent events in the diocese.

It also contains links to daily morning prayer services by the Dean, as well as the weekly Eucharists led by the Bishop.

ANGLICAN  
FOUNDATION OF CANADA



## Say Yes! to Kids

Since 2011, AFC's Kids Helping Kids Fund has granted over \$100,000 in support of the health and well-being of Canadian children. AFC has heard the growing concern about COVID-19's potential long-term impact on youth. We want you to be part of our visionary response. Help us say Yes! to initiatives that address emerging realities for children in a post-pandemic world.

Make a 10th anniversary gift to the Kids Helping Kids Fund and say Yes! to kids.

DONATE ONLINE TODAY

[www.anglicanfoundation.org/kids](http://www.anglicanfoundation.org/kids)

Registered Canada Charitable BN 11921 2405 RR0001

# News from the Pews

## ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL, BRANDON

*adapted from the parish newsletter "Holy Notes". The original article was written by Pat Turner.*

In collaboration with the Rev'd Dr. Grayhame Bowcott from Huron, the Rev'd Dr. Paul Shore is leading this engaging study for approximately twenty interested persons from around the diocese.

Not only is Paul engaged in vital ministry both pastoral and clerical at the cathedral, but he also ministers to "the world". You may have noticed that pre-COVID, he occasionally disappeared for a period of time; he was lecturing in Spain or Belgium or wherever. Not unlike a certain Paul of the New Testament, his ministry reaches well beyond his home turf. How blessed we are that he also chooses to share his knowledge on-line. Even in COVID times, ministry carries on! I most appreciate that this is available not only to those who pursue theological goals but also to any interested laity.

Have you ever been challenged to respond to a Biblical story, perhaps a parable, by imagining yourself in the crowd that gathered centuries ago to hear Jesus preach? For this shy, reticent soul, this was a difficult task. So difficult that the best I could imagine was the reader hovering on the periphery of the action. This current study has exposed what the life of a Hebrew in Palestine during Jesus' ministry was really like. It has gifted the class a deeper understanding of the land, the people and the life-style of biblical times.

A few random nuggets from this class:

- The land was tangible proof of God's relationship to Israel. Ties of emotion, memory, family and belief were inescapably bound to the experience of the land. The land was also one's future.
- Hebrew terminology and nomenclature speaks especially to the past and to family relationship. That Aramaic, his language of public discourse, is an emotional language suggests that Jesus was likely a very expressive, emotional, terse and passionate speaker.
- Jesus' disturbing statement in Matt 5:31-32, was intended to keep the Jewish family together during the difficult time of Roman occupation when other traditions were under great stress.
- *Symbolon*, the original Greek word for creed, means something the sum of which is greater than its parts. This makes the creed more than a declaration of faith. It is the active connecting of the self to God. It is related to the active or passive worship of the people. Both parts have to be actively involved!

\*This study is a gift received; this report is a gift shared. Thanks to the Pauls of the world, then and now, the Gospel is very much alive. Alleluia!

### ST. MARY'S, VIRDEN *as written by the Editor (aka: the Rector)*

On February 25, one of our beloved long-time parishioners, Jessie Bratton, entered into God's nearer presence. As I remarked during the funeral, Jessie was always in the background of parish life. The photo below is from the 125th anniversary tea of the parish in 2017.

As one of the senior members of our church at the time, she was invited to cut the cake alongside of me. Well done, Jessie, thou good and faithful servant. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. You will be missed. *Photo Credit: Carrie Williams/Virden Empire-Advance*



### PELLY PLAINS PARISH *text submitted by Virginia Beeleart*

Everyone has become more comfortable with online church services. Lay Readers Joanne Goodman of Christ Church Roblin and Geordie Daneluk of Christ Church Russell as well as clergy have led Zoom Sunday services in Pelly Plains in conjunction with

the Rev'd Chris Pilon who celebrates the Eucharist.

Each week Toon Cozens of St. Matthew's Binscarth has organized the readers from different points in the parish.

### HOLY SAINTS PARISH *text submitted by Kathy Roberts*

Parishioners of St. James, Rivers were so happy when we were once again able to worship in church. Our first service was on Ash Wednesday and we now have regular Sunday services.

We had a brief annual meeting following the Sunday service on February 24th. All officers agreed to continue for another year.

Holy Week services in the parish will take place each day of the week. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, there will be ser-

vices each day at St. James', Rivers at 8:30pm, followed by Holy Trinity, Miniota at 5:30pm. St. James' will host the Maundy Thursday service at 7:30pm. On Good Friday, St. James will have a service at 10:00 a.m., and Holy Trinity will have one at 5:30 p.m.

Easter Day will have services in both churches at their regular times: 9:00am at St. James', Rivers and 11:30am at Holy Trinity, Miniota.



## The Sounds of Lent at the Cathedral

*text and photos by the Rev'd Dr. Paul Shore  
Deacon Assistant, St. Matthew's Cathedral, Brandon*



The sound is haunting and clear, and somehow a perfect fit for Lent. Hildegard's poetry (sung for us in Latin with organ accompaniment by David Naylor) is filled with striking and unexpected imagery:

*O strength of Wisdom  
Who, as you circled, have embraced all things  
in a path filled with life  
Three wings are yours...*

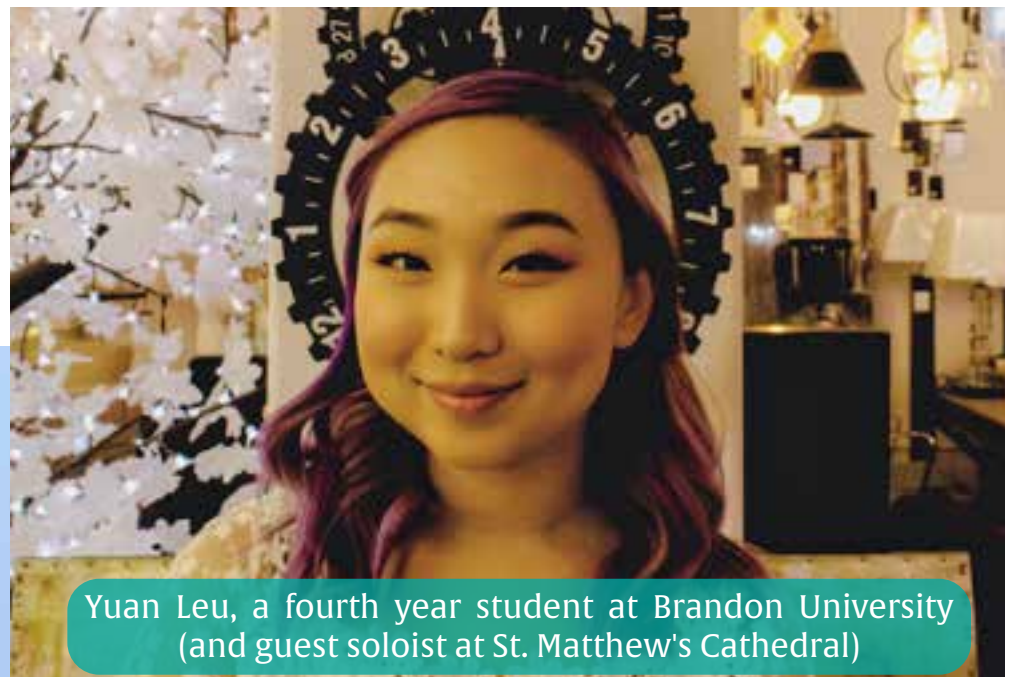
On the second Sunday of Lent, in addition to a vocal contribution by Luke Munchinsky, Yuan Liu sang, with David's organ accompaniment, Hildegard's "Ave Generosa," a celebration of the Virgin Mary, which includes the lines:

*Your flesh rejoiced  
Just as a blade of grass  
On which the dew has fallen,  
Viridity within it to infuse  
Just so it happened unto you...*

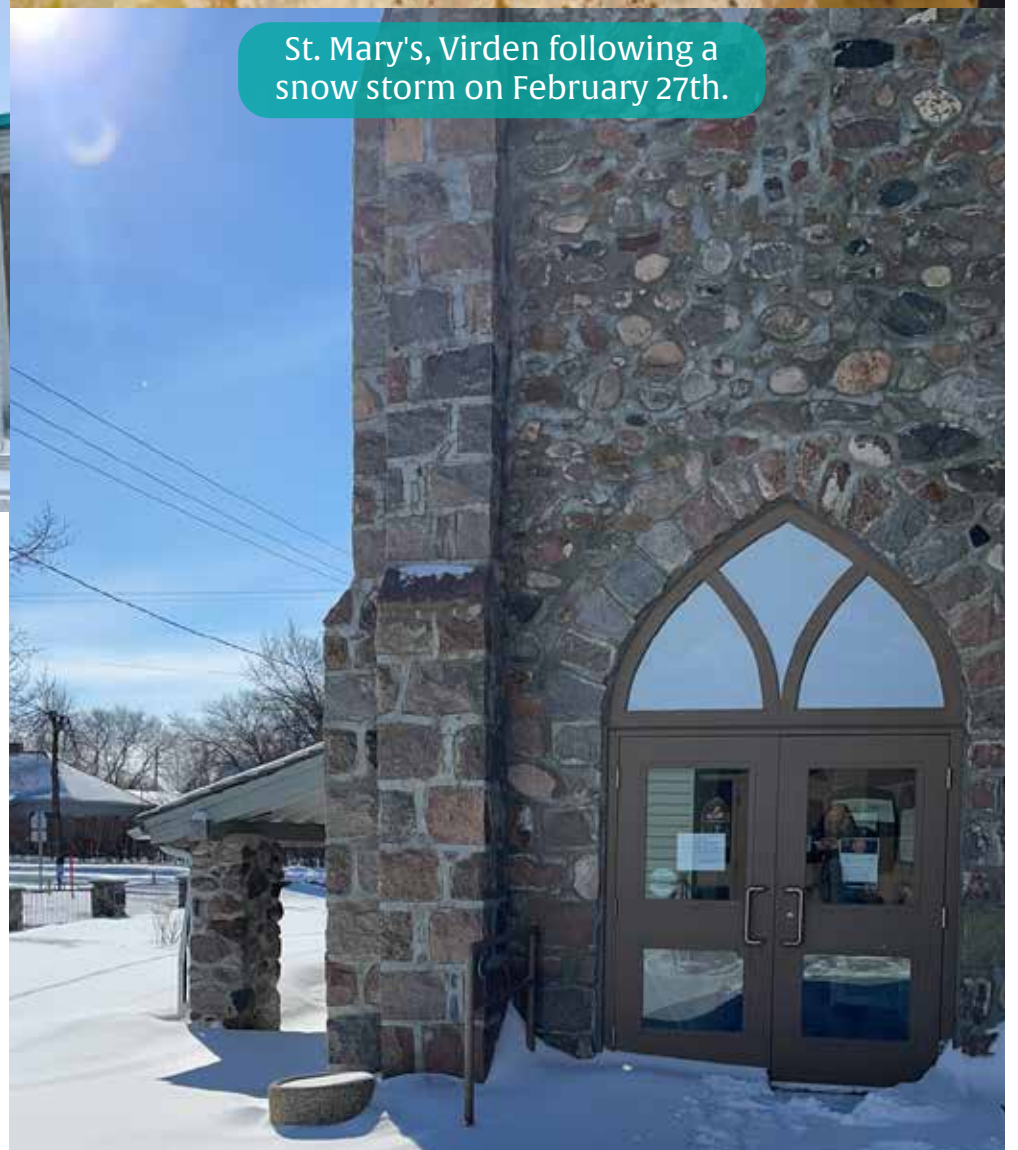
St. Matthew's has continued with its "Hildegardian" Lent, a time of reflection, of pilgrimage, and of escape from daily distractions, and, as pandemic restrictions ease, looks forward to a song-filled liturgical year.

What does Lent sound like? We have a clear sonic sense of Christmas: carols and other sounds refined by winter weather, while Easter calls forth memories of favourite hymns, and of Handel's Messiah (which of course is part of the sound of Christmas as well).

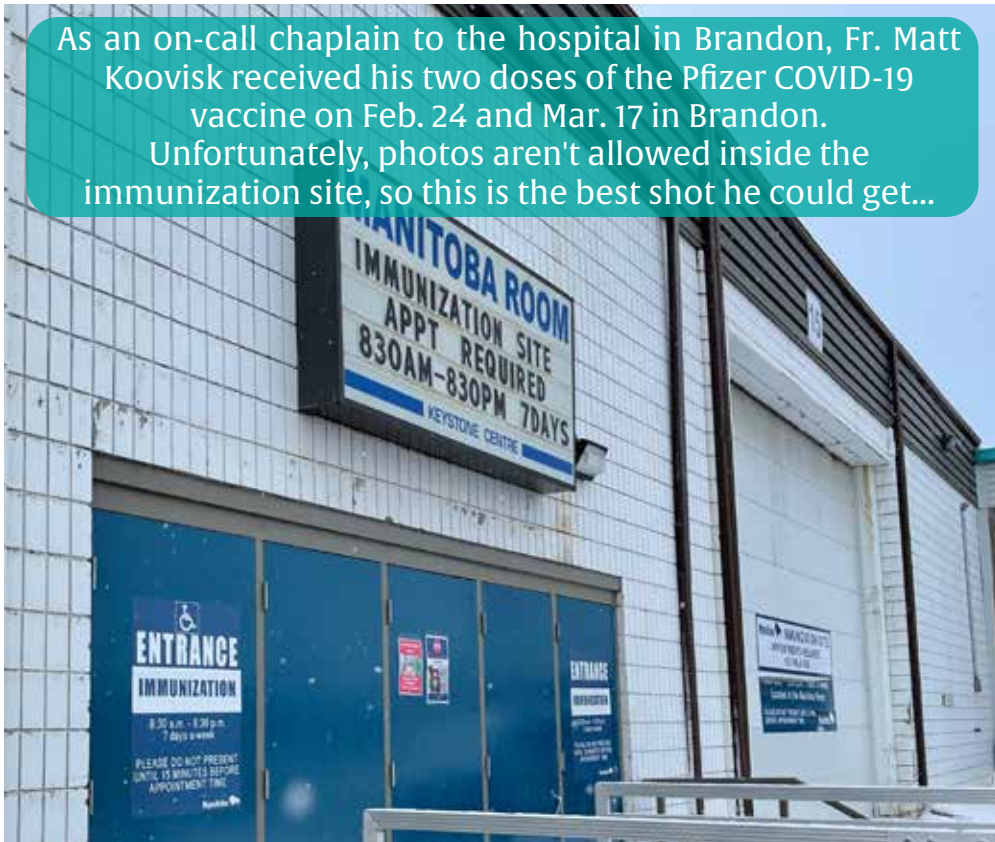
Lent might seem to be a time of absences and thus silence, but it has its sounds too, and at St. Matthew's Cathedral we have been transported across time and space to the world of Hildegard of Bingen, a Medieval mystic and teacher who composed hymns and poetry drawn from her ecstatic visions. On the first Sunday of Lent, St. Matthew's was filled with her new sounds. The following Sundays have also been enriched by the words and music by Hildegard, and by guest vocalists.



Yuan Leu, a fourth year student at Brandon University (and guest soloist at St. Matthew's Cathedral)



St. Mary's, Virden following a snow storm on February 27th.



As an on-call chaplain to the hospital in Brandon, Fr. Matt Koovisk received his two doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on Feb. 24 and Mar. 17 in Brandon. Unfortunately, photos aren't allowed inside the immunization site, so this is the best shot he could get...

**Brockie  
Donovan**  
FUNERAL & CREMATION SERVICES  
332-8th Street, Brandon, MB, R7A 3X4  
TELEPHONE: 204-727-0694

Serving the Brandon and the  
Westman Community since 1906.  
<http://www.brockiedonovan.com>