





## A Word From Our Bishop



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

It is the Easter season, and we are celebrating the resurrection of the Lord and the conquering of death by Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith. The resurrected life greets us as a surprise, Jesus calls us out of the dark and cool peace of the tomb; into a riot of colour and sound and blinding light of the rising sun. You are no longer dead. You have been resurrected and that means that you must now find what it is that God has resurrected you for.

I was raised in the church that was obsessed with whether or not one was "saved". It was a natural part of our language and I had understood clearly that I was saved from sin and death, so long as I kept to the straight and narrow road that I was always being warned about. However in all the years that I attended church, it was never made clear what I "saved" for! This question was a revelation.

It is not a matter of my being ungrateful for the fact that Christ has saved me. I have given my life and heart to the Lord and serve him daily, but that service has to take a shape in each of our lives, and that shape is the very thing we are saved "for". Perhaps you have been chosen by God to do justice in every day life by leading efforts to care for the poor or the hungry. Perhaps you have a sense that God is leading you to preach the gospel and want to lead in the church. It may be that you have a wish to teach the faith to those younger as they prepare for their confirmation. These three examples show what you could be saved for. It is also possible that you may be called to be an every day disciple of Jesus Christ in your ordinary life. Nothing heroic or special in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of God, a saint and a citizen of the kingdom. Having been saved from sin and death, your discipleship and faithfulness may be what you are saved for.

The risen Jesus confronts me with a new life and this means that I have to look beyond the way I had always thought of myself, and what I had always thought about the world and my responsibility in proclaiming that new life. So....I'm risen with Jesus, and I have been given a new life. I have overcome sin and death and the grave because I have been buried with him in his death and I stand with him in the garden because I am raised with him to new life. Now what?

This is the question that faces us in the weeks that follow Easter. We celebrate on the day of the resurrection, but what about a few weeks later when the lilies have drooped and the brass is tarnishing again and the attendance at church as normalized after the Easter rush? Then the good news has to grab us in a new way. The choice to leave the garden tomb is the choice to explore the new life we have been given and the new world which love has made for us. It requires risk. The risk to love, to be loved, and even to be rejected, but it also means that we face whatever cross that follows firm in the knowledge that death is a temporary inconvenience in the kingdom. It only holds us for a bit, and then we are back to living and praising and preaching and caring and loving like we were before. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! And SO ARE WE!

### The Mustard Seed

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7th Bishop of Brandon

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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.



The Bishop participated in the Diocese of Athabasca's Bible reading Marathon on Zoom on March 31st.



Snow Lake Anglican/United Church  
Photo Credit: the Rev'd Dr. Kara Mandryk



# News from the Pews

## ST. JOHN'S, RESTON as submitted by Pat Forbes, Lay Reader

HIDDEN TREASURES, operated by St. John's Church volunteers has been in business for 5 years. The Ven. Don Bernhardt cut the red ribbon at our grand opening on April 21, 2016. Even though this was a new venture for us we had some twenty five plus years of experience holding semi annual thrift sales in the parish hall. When we opened the store we had some empty spaces on the shelves and we immediately unpacked every bag and box donation that came in the back door. We even had time to dust the shelves. Now we never are short of bags and boxes to unpack and very seldom are there empty spaces on the shelves. If there are we quickly find something to fill the space.

The store was closed for 3 ½ months during 2020 due to the Covid 19 restrictions. We could tell our supporters were busy cleaning out closets and cupboards during this time because the donations never stopped coming to the back door. When we were able to open just before Christmas the most often made comment we heard was "I am so glad you are open". We were glad to be open too. We missed all our friends. Over the 5 years our income has grown more than we expected. So not only have we managed to keep the doors open to our little church up the street but we have been able to make more than 20 monetary donations to groups and causes that needed a boost plus supply store items where needed in the community. This has been made possible by the wonderful support we received from the people who donate and shop at the store. We owe a huge thank you to each and every one of you.



Then-Archdeacon Don Bernhardt cuts the ribbon which is held by Dene Skelton and Nancy Schiltroth, while St. John's parishioners look on.  
Photo Credit: Reston Recorder/Glacier Media



# Easter from the Pews

While public worship in the Diocese of Brandon this past Easter didn't look like it did pre-pandemic, many churches throughout the diocese were able to gather in-person for worship on Easter, with COVID-19 protocols in place (such as masks on while singing and moving about the church, and being limited to 25% capacity.)

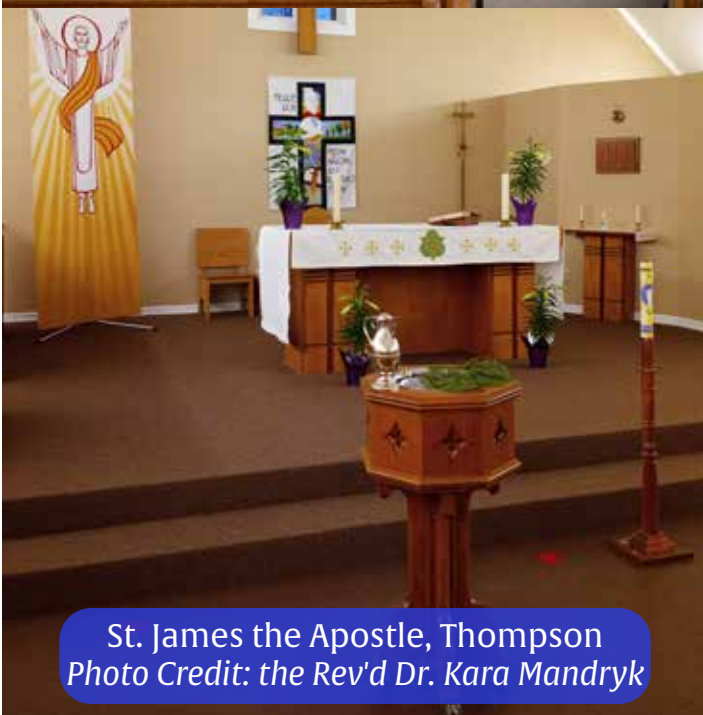
Even though it didn't look like Easter celebrations of the past, churches were able to decorate for this wonderful day in our Christian calendar. Below are some of the churches of the diocese that submitted photos!



St. Paul's, Wawanesa  
Photo Credit: the Rev'd Chris Evetts



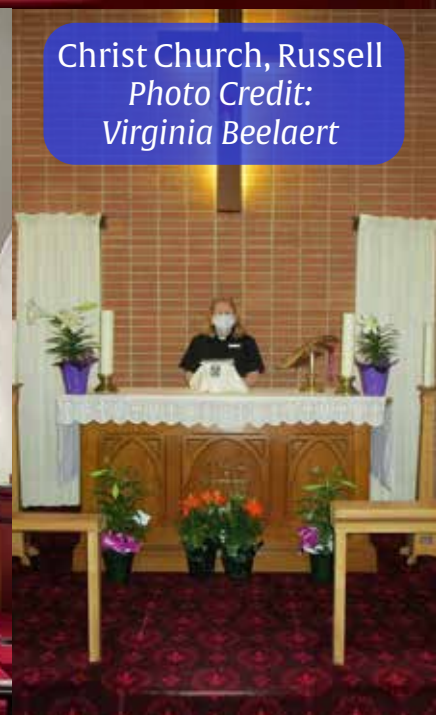
St. Mary's, Brandon  
Photo Credit: the Rev'd Chris Evetts



St. James the Apostle, Thompson  
Photo Credit: the Rev'd Dr. Kara Mandryk



St. Mary's, Virden  
Photo Credit: the Editor



Christ Church, Russell  
Photo Credit: Virginia Beelaert



## From Strength to Strength: A Reflection on the Annunciation

*text & image submitted by the Rev'd Dr. Paul Shore  
Deacon Assistant, St. Matthew's Cathedral, Brandon*



The Annunciation of our Lord,  
as painted by Leonardo da Vinci, circa 1472.

On March 24, the Feast of the Annunciation, in a guest sermon at St. Matthew's, Father Matt Koovisk (who was also celebrating the fourth anniversary of his ordination as deacon that day) pointed out that the Annunciation works like a "flashback" preceding the events of Holy Week, providing the backstory to act of transformative love that we recall at Easter. In the well known passage from Luke, Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel, who tells her of the Child she will bear.

### A (Short) Sermon on the Annunciation

*as preached (and transcribed) by the Editor*



Fr. Matt Koovisk after  
preaching and presiding  
at the Cathedral on the  
fourth anniversary of his  
deaconing.

*Note: This sermon was originally preached on March 24th, 2021 by me as I celebrated the Wednesday Eucharist at the Cathedral in thanksgiving for the four year anniversary of my ordination as a Deacon. It has been transcribed (and cleaned up a bit) for your reading pleasure. During the pandemic, I've recorded a sermon each week for the local radio station in Virden, and you can find them (along with the original recording of the sermon below) at <http://www.anchor.fm/matt-koovisk>.*

*Perhaps this sermon might be appropriate for this issue since the month of May is considered by some Christians to be the month devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, with Christians around the world participating in devotions to our Blessed Mother. The text for this sermon is Luke 1: 26-38.*

One of the things that I've had to think about in the past year since this pandemic began is that I've had to think more about video production than I ever did when I was ordained a deacon four years ago. It would seem that movies and TV shows

The retelling of this story usually focuses on Mary's obedience, as expressed in her words, "Let it be done according to Your will." We'd be off base, however to read this declaration as a sign of passivity or weakness. You can also hear resolve and strength in these words. When Leonardo da Vinci set out to paint this encounter, he gave us some hints on how to understand it. Mary is no plaster backyard saint here. She has been reading a book, and her hand still rests on its pages. Her pose is one of calm and confidence, as she welcomes the mighty Archangel who, rather than striking an intimidating pose, kneels before her! This very young Mary (and she probably was a teenager) is queenly in her dignity, but not haughty. She has, as we would say today, a handle on the situation.

have become an even bigger part of our lives in this pandemic. One of the things that people do when making movies and TV shows is that they use "flashbacks" to help move the story line along. As we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation this day, I can't help but wonder if this device can't help us to understand this Feast in a new light. Let me explain.

We are about to enter into one of the most sacred weeks of the church year – Palm Sunday will be here very soon. I can't help but wonder the liturgical calendar is lining up this year to remind us as we enter into this Holy Week once more. In my high school video production class, I was taught that "flashbacks" are a good way to set the scene for the viewer. It might help us this day to look at the events of the Feast of the Annunciation as a flashback – especially as it falls so close to Holy Week, and we hear the story of Jesus' betrayal, trial, crucifixion and death. This day, we "flash back" to the events of the announcement of the annunciation and hear the story about how it all began.

It all began in a spectacular way with the Archangel Gabriel coming to the Blessed Virgin Mary and saying "Greetings, favoured one, the Lord is with you." It began with the Archangel Gabriel reminding the Blessed Mother about what God will do – that she will bear a son. His name will be Jesus and he will be the Son of the Most High.

It is helpful for us to remember these things as we walk into the events of Holy Week, a week that is filled with betrayal, a week that is filled with darkness, a week where we walk into the valley of the shadow of death once more. As we remember the story of the annunciation, and as we walk into the events of Holy Week once more, let us remember the central truth that Mary says: "For nothing will be impossible with God."

My friends, let us take Mary's words to heart this day. Let us ponder them, let them sink into you and let them be a refrain for you as you enter into Holy Week, a week where it can be easy for us to be enveloped by darkness, just like the disciples were that first Holy Week. Let us remember that with God, nothing is impossible. Let us remember that while the darkness may come upon us, it is not the end of the story, for as our Blessed Mother reminds us day after day, nothing is impossible with God.

And for that, we give thanks, now and forevermore. Amen.

**The Ladies Getaway**  
"The Three In One: A Love Story"  
scheduled for June 2021

This event has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is our hope to have it from June 10-12, 2022!



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