

A Word From Our Bishop

Language is something that we use every day. It is charged with all manner of importance. We are still learning the damage done to the peoples and cultures whose languages were nearly wiped out by the residential school system. When I see the struggle of some in the Indigenous community to communicate with the elders because of the loss of language, I am shocked by the damage that has been done to people just by the insistence on “rightness” of a dominant language. In my own family tree, among my ancestors, gaelic and welsh were the languages spoken, but that heritage has long been extinguished now.

When the Executive of the Diocese meets, we have been taking advantage of the fact that we have learned and wise Cree speakers in The Reverend Flora Young and The Venerable Lydia Constant to help us understand and learn the Lord’s Prayer line by line in Cree. The Cree words make my tongue twist and stumble and I am humbled by the patience and dedication of our teachers as we all learn, one line at a time, the prayer which Jesus taught us.

The grappling with language is universal however. For the years I worked at the university one of the things that every first-year student had to do was learn a whole new vocabulary to the language they already knew. Whatever they were studying, they had to learn the words that helped them describe the work that they were setting out to do. In this way they were forced to grapple with language, and what language means



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

and power of language in how we think.

Poetry comes close in trying to say profound things about how our love, or God, or nature, or hope are made real to us. Music is a language too but one without words. But what language can we apply to the mystery of Christ being present intimately within the community of believers? What words can describe the God who is transcendent and simply beyond our capacity to understand? Could we ever describe the depth or height of who God is? This profound paradox of Christmas is exposed in the simplicity of and urgency of the birth of a baby, and the glory and grandeur of God in the angels’ song.

I said one day in front of a group of folks who were genuinely struggling with this point on language and the utter imminence and transcendence of God that it must be painful for God to use language; that the act of speaking in the limited medium of words must somehow be such a condescension that it exposes the deepest and most profound love for us. God really is a fool in love with these creatures who are so wanton and unworthy and willing to throw that gift of love around so

freely - and yet God kept coming to us in the Word of the Law, the Word of the Prophets and finally the Word made flesh: Jesus.

It is approaching Epiphany. God has whisked back the curtain on the mystery of the little one born to be light in the darkness and the people who walked in darkness have been invited into God’s inner circle to see a great light. The nobodies of the world have been presented with the ultimate somebody. These are all paradoxes: we are celebrating the birth in time of the timeless Son of God. The Gentiles have come to worship a God they haven’t known and give gifts to the One who is gift-made-flesh. A baby born to a Virgin; paradox after paradox after paradox.

We are now in the process of living into the implications of the paradoxes of the Word made flesh. The sacrifice of this heart-strong God who keeps communicating with us from “beyond beyond” but who dwells among us as “beneath beneath” is one which transfixes us with its persistent and constant love. This One who loves us, who has called us by name is still here; in our midst, in our joy, in our sorrow and in our triumph. Revealed to us again and again through words. Beautiful, limiting, maddening words: the Word made flesh.



The Bishop visited St. Mary’s, Virden on November 21st to baptize and confirm Sally Doerksen. For more, see page 3.

The Mustard Seed

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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, Morning Prayer services with the Dean, Sunday Eucharists with the Bishop, as well as photos from recent events in the diocese.

News from the Pews

ST. JAMES, RIVERS submitted by Kathy Roberts



Some of the work of the Sticks and Strings ladies.



The year has drawn to a close and as we look back we are so thankful that our St. James family has "stayed healthy" and that Sunday services have been restored.

Restrictions were followed and in the fall we were able to once again hold our Mom's

Pantry fundraiser and our knitting group aka "Sticks and Strings" were able to gather on Friday mornings.

The Sticks and Strings ladies have been very busy knitting a variety of items. They have kindly donated many toques, scarves, mit-

tens, blankets and toys which were donated to The Women's Shelter in Brandon. Many thanks ladies!

ST. PETER & ST. JAMES', FLIN FLON photo and text submitted by Shelley Andres



Rod Walker playing the bagpipes!

On Sunday, November 14, St. Peter and St. James', Flin Flon had their People's Warden, Rod Walker pipe during the service. Being People's Warden is Rod's first position in the church, and we are thrilled to have him in this position.

It is tradition in Flin Flon that Rod pipes for the local Remembrance Day service, and he hoped that he could participate in our service in the same way. We were absolutely thrilled to have him.

During our Sunday service, he piped the second hymn, which was "Amazing Grace", as well as the traditional "Lament", which takes place between the "Last Post" and "Reveille" in the Remembrance Day service. He also piped the last hymn, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee."

Thanks, Rod! We have appreciated your playing for us!

ST. MARY'S, VIRDEN submitted by the Editor/the Rector



From left to right: The Bishop, Fr. Matt Koovisk, Sally Doerksen, the Rev'd Anna Sproule, and Marjorie Andrew.

On November 21 (the Feast of Christ the King), the Bishop visited St. Mary's in Virden for the first time in two years (due to the pandemic.)

While he was with the parish, he baptized and confirmed Sally Doerksen. Sally joined the parish during the pandemic, and after a conversation with me, it was discovered that she had not been baptized. She indicated that she would like to be baptized. Marjorie Andrew (one of the parish lay readers) and I sponsored her.

One of the ancient traditions that we have is that in the earliest days of the church, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation were actually administered together in the same service (usually at the Easter vigil.)

The church was "pandemic-full", and people were overjoyed to see Sally take this step in her life.

Congratulations, Sally! We're thrilled you're here.



Sally poses with her cake.

A Life of Prayer

as submitted by Virginia Beelaert
Pelly Plains Parish

What happens in a prayer group?

The Rev'd Lorraine Bonnell has answered that question and more in an email interview.

Lorraine runs the parish prayer group, and is an honorary assistant in the parish.

VB: *What motivated you to start a prayer group in the parish?*

LB⁺: Starting the parish prayer group is an extension of my own prayer life. My love and concern for the parish needed a practical way to express itself and the group was a way of deepening relationships with God and with others for the good of the parish.

VB: *How long is a prayer group meeting in this parish?*

LB⁺: The meetings are planned for an hour but we are not tied to that limit. If the Spirit is moving we continue on.

VB: *How is the meeting structured?*

LB⁺: We open in prayer and view a video together. Following the video, we continue in a more free-form time of prayer, using the word **HOPE** as an anagram. "H" stands for "honouring God" with our praises and thanksgiving for the "Big Stuff", that is for His love in sending Jesus to be our Saviour, For the Cross, for being our Protector etc. The "O" stands for "Opposite", reminding us of our need for forgiveness for all the times we have failed to be the People of God that He has called us to be.

"P" stands for "God's plan" for our lives and for the life of the parish, asking Him to show us the prayers that are needed to fulfill His plans. The "E" stands for "even us." Even we can hear God's voice if we take the time to listen, which is what we do at this point. We listen in silence until we hear from Him. Someone will get a word or image and if we see God's love in it we will pray into that. At the end of the meeting we again give our thanks and praise to Almighty God for leading us in this time of prayer. We close our time together with either the Lord's Prayer or the doxology ("Glory to God".)

VB: *Prayers are not always answered to our satisfaction. How does one prevent a prayer group from becoming discouraged?*

LB⁺: In this instance, because we are seeking to pray into God's plan for our people and parish, we are looking with expectation for the answer to our prayer. When one comes before God with a "grocery list" of names and demands and expectations, that may not be part of His plan, we can expect to have our prayers "unanswered" and that can be very discouraging. However, coming before Him with empty hands and seeking for His plan and then praying into that allows us to wait and watch for the answer. I can't say we will always get it right but I can say that if we don't get an answer, it is up to us to persist and seek what is blocking that answer and amend our prayers to suit His plan and purpose. When our prayers fall into God's purposes then the answer will always be "yes and Amen."

VB: *Do prayer groups work best if the participants know and are comfortable with one another?*

LB⁺: Prayer groups do work best if the participants know and are comfortable with one another. However this is something we grow into. I've been a part of many prayer groups over the years and in many different places. A person from the group has invited me to join and in a very short time I have become one of the group. So one should never be afraid to join an established prayer group. What matters is that you have a heart for God's work and are there to serve Him in your prayer and praise. The focus is on God not self.

VB: *Are there any final thoughts that you would like to add about prayer or prayer groups?*

LB⁺: Prayer is a service to God and even if you are the only person in your community who seeks His will He will honour that. I think I heard Bishop William once say, you may pray alone in your house but you are never alone, all the Saints surround you and your prayers are joined with theirs. The prayer group is a place where we can encourage and grow our faith together through service to God. Whether or not you join a prayer group please keep on praying and serving in the Kingdom of God.

Editor's Note: This interview has been edited for clarity and length.



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Memorial Gospel Jamboree

for the late
Deacon Caroline Chartrand & Eileen Lavallee

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

January 14th, 15th & 16th, 2022
7:00pm Nightly
with various musicians,
guest speakers & refreshments each night

Easterville Community Hall
Easterville, MB

For more information, contact
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