

A Word From Our Bishop

Faith is a gift. This is a truth which many people who begin to struggle with their faith and its implications fail to understand. Many people, when confronted with the idea of “believing in Jesus” or even coming to church at all are trying to find a way to “believe” what the Church says or what the Bible teaches, but they get stumped; they can’t find a way to believe, or feel like they believe. They can’t quite get their brains to commit to “belief”. Faith and belief are used synonymously. They use the words interchangeably. But there is a subtle difference. To believe something (in the world of a thoughtful adult of today) usually means the acceptance of a series of points up against a whole series of other points. In light of the argument of the atheist writers: God exists. In the face of a world filled with evil consequences: God loves us. In the light of the suffering and wrongdoing in the world: God sent his Son to live and die for us.

To the average person who struggles with their own place in the world of doubts and the proliferation of conspiracy theories, and endless hours of television programs promoting yet another theory about how things aren’t as they seem, “believing” the tenets of a faith can be difficult. Without acceptable evidence of the points of faith listed above, a well trained mind cannot simply believe what has been put forward. Is it any wonder that one generation looks at the values of another and shakes their head at what seems to be incomprehensible.



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

But think for a second about what belief/faith really is. The best way to tease this out by asking what the opposite of believing is....and then the opposite of faith. Often I get different answers: the opposite of believing is not believing, while the stock answer from most people is that the opposite of faith is doubt.

I have to point out that the opposite of faith is not doubt the opposite of faith is certainty. Doubt can still be a friend to believers and in integral part of good faith, for it can keep faith from tipping over into certainty. Certainty does not require faith, it admits no doubt and carries on impervious to the grey areas of life, certainty does not hope for anything, it knows for it has seen. This makes certainty the opposite of faith. Faith, like love, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor 13.7), but it does not include certainty. The author of the book of Hebrews points out “Faith is the confidence in what we hope for. The assurance of things we do not see” (Hebrews 11.1) Faith includes confidence, and hope (for things unseen), but there is no certainty here. There is only faith: confidence, assurance, and hope, yes - but not certainty.

This is first step in making yourself from a believer into a disciple. A disciple is an active agent, confident in the constant love of God and hoping for all the gifts and blessings promised by the Lord - but ready and hopeful even when they do not appear. In difficulty, patience is engaged, compassion is cultivated and the community of believers supports and upholds one another in the act of being a disciple, walking a way that makes a difference in the lives around us. When others look at us, and at our lives, few ask us what we believe, for what we believe is made manifest in how we live, and that is the definition of disciple. Belief is only a step on the way to a deeper meaning of being a disciple and walking with Jesus in faith.

We are approaching Lent, which will be our extended time to cultivate our faith, compassion and love to deepen ourselves for the Paschal mystery. It is time to move from being a believer to being a disciple - to walk the way with the Lord in hope and confidence of what has been promised. Knowing that the One who promises is faithful beyond our capacity to ask or imagine.

The Mustard Seed

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7th Bishop of Brandon

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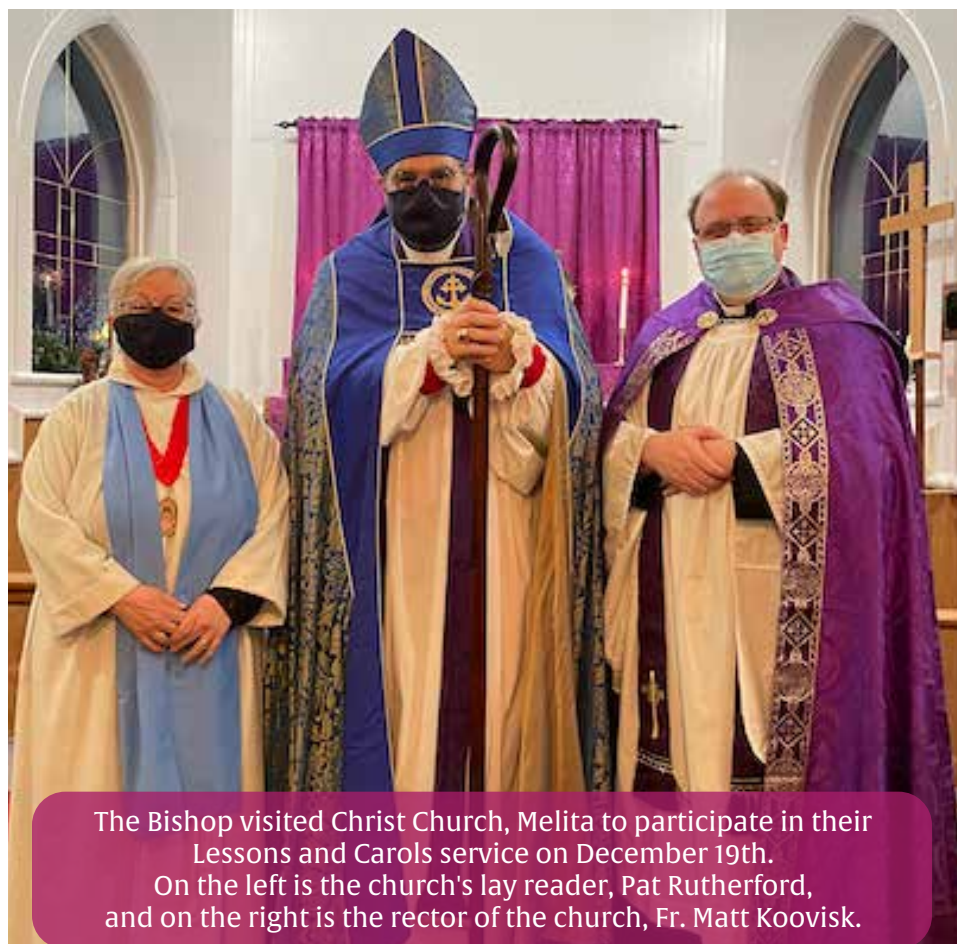
The Mustard Seed is circulated ten times a year (from September to June), as a section of the Anglican Journal, to all supporting households in the Diocese of Brandon.

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



The Bishop visited Christ Church, Melita to participate in their Lessons and Carols service on December 19th. On the left is the church's lay reader, Pat Rutherford, and on the right is the rector of the church, Fr. Matt Koovisk.

Christmas from the Pews

Last year, due to the pandemic, we weren't able to gather in our churches for Christmas. This year, we've been incredibly blessed to be gathered in our varied churches once more to commemorate the birth of the Christ child.

One of the traditions that comes with the celebrations of Christmas is that our churches spend some time decorating, and out of that come some pretty spectacular images.

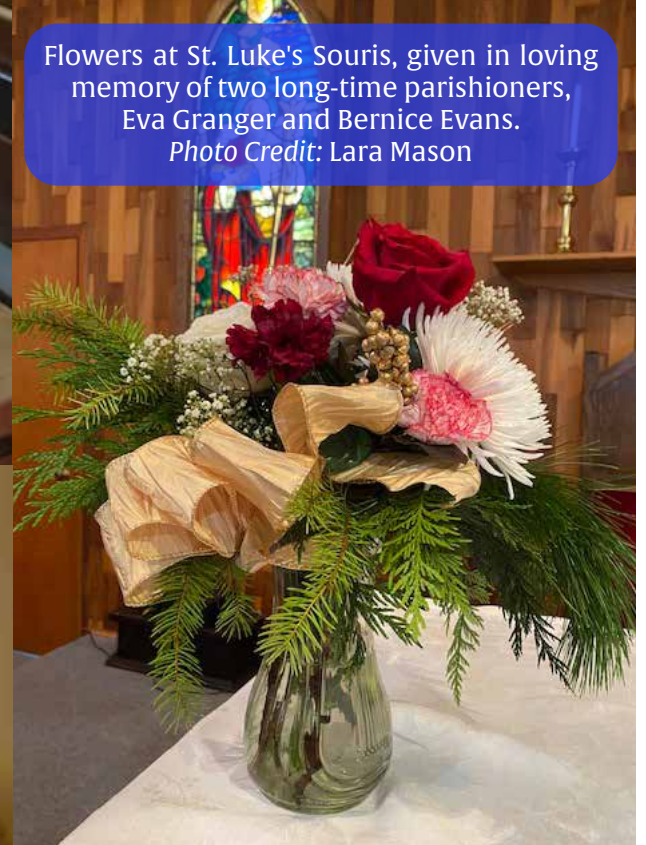
Below, you'll see some photos from parishes across the diocese. I truly hope that you enjoy a brief glimpse into the worshipping life of parishes across the diocese!



Christ Church, Russell
Photo Credit: Virginia Beelaert



St. James', Rivers
Photo Credit: Kathy Roberts



Flowers at St. Luke's Souris, given in loving memory of two long-time parishioners, Eva Granger and Bernice Evans.
Photo Credit: Lara Mason



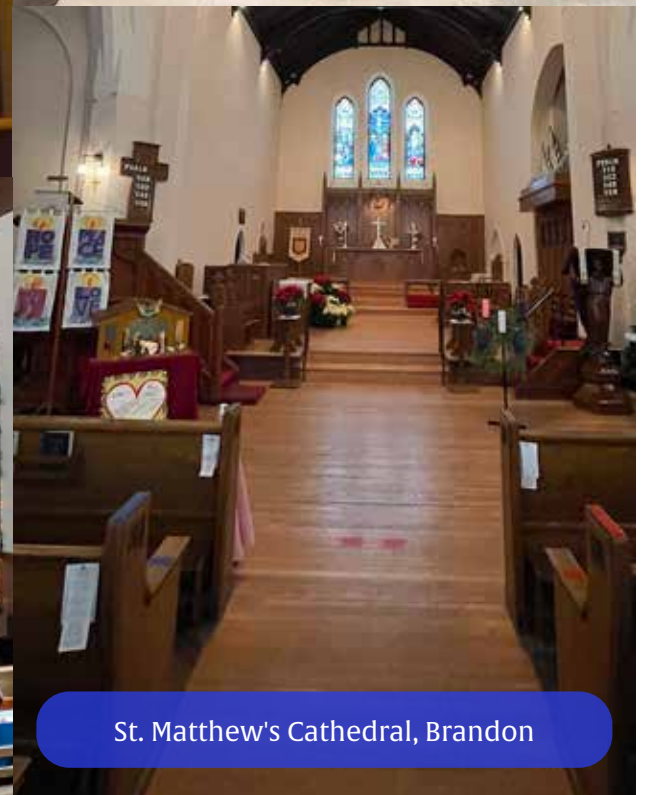
St. Mary's, Brandon
Photo Credit: David Vail



St. Peter & St. James', Flin Flon
Photo Credit: Shelley Andres



St. Paul's, MacGregor
Photo Credit: The Rev'd Chris Evetts



St. Matthew's Cathedral, Brandon



St. John's, Reston



Christ Church, Melita



St. Mary's, Virden

PWRDF Responds to Omicron Variant in Northern Manitoba

as written by Janice Biehn

Communications & Marketing Coordinator, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

In consultation with Archbishop Mark MacDonald and the Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, PWRDF is forwarding an in-Canada emergency grant of \$50,000 to support northern Indigenous communities responding to recent COVID surges in northern Manitoba.

The Indigenous People's Alliance of Manitoba-North (IPAM-N) will use the funds to purchase and distribute face masks, test kits and supplies for cleaning and disinfecting. The items will be delivered to Sherridon, Pikwitonei, Thicket Portage, Grand Rapids, Wabowden, Cormorant, Easterville, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, Moose Lake, Brochet and Thompson.

The needed supplies were identified by IPAM-N members, including Freda Lepine, who is also a member of PWRDF's Indigenous Partner Advisory Committee.

"It's a big thing," says Lepine of the \$50,000 from her home in Wabowden. "We stretch our dollar. We don't want to help just one community, but this allows us to get cleaning supplies to many communities."

Throughout the pandemic IPAM has been supporting several communities with food hampers, educational supplies, and delivering meals to those who are shut-in. They have also made it possible for food to be harvested and for younger people to learn about this cultural tradition, which also plays a vital part in food security. "We were able to provide funds for gas for hunters to get out and harvest six caribou which were then shared with the community," says Lepine.

Lepine notes that IPAM may be able to include some of these cleaning supplies with food hamper deliveries, in order to maximize efficiency.

PWRDF is in conversation with other communities in need, most notably Tataskweyak Cree Nation in Northern Manitoba, which declared a state of emergency due to the rapidly spreading Omicron variant. At midnight January 7, the community of 3,000 went into lockdown, said Bishop Larry Beardy on Facebook. "Our health staff are tired and overwhelmed," wrote Beardy. There are only two nurses at the health centre on five-hour shifts and two front line responders doing testing. "The cases are exploding in our communities. Please pray for the sick, and all in the communities."

Bishop Beardy is the Indigenous Suffragan Bishop of Mishamikoweesh's Northern Manitoba Area Mission. PWRDF Executive Director Will Postma has spoken with Bishop Beardy as well as with Bishop Geoff Woodcroft of the Diocese of Rupert's Land about an additional emergency response that is not yet finalized. Goods and supplies for communities in northern Manitoba would be purchased in Winnipeg and then transported to the north. Bishop Woodcroft noted supplies purchased with PWRDF funds would add to goods and donations already received by the Diocese.

While temperatures plunge to 30 and 40 degrees below zero, please keep these communities in your prayers as they try to self-isolate and return to good health.

To make a donation to this response, visit our website at <http://www.pwrdf.org>. You may also donate by phone at 416-822-9083 or leave a voicemail toll-free at 1-866-308-7973 and we will return your call, or mail your cheque to PWRDF, 80 Hayden Street, Toronto, ON, M4Y 3G2. Please mark Indigenous COVID in the memo field.

Anglican Foundation Grants

as submitted by Michelle Hauser

The Anglican Foundation of Canada

"I want to encourage all Canadian Anglicans to take a closer look at AFC," says Dr. Scott Brubacher, Executive Director, Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC), "and the April 1, 2022, grant application deadline presents the perfect opportunity for them to do that."

Founded in 1957, the AFC remains best known for supporting church infrastructure projects. As Brubacher remarks, "That's completely understandable because for many churches, the call to imagine more has included funding for ramps, lifts, roofs, washrooms, and so much of the essential infrastructure that allows churches to welcome parishioners and reach out to community members." In the past decade, of the more than \$6 million in grants and loans awarded, nationally, forty per cent went to support infrastructure projects.

In recent years, the AFC has also become a major

partner in innovative ministry and spiritual formation projects, funding visionary programming that reflect an increasingly missional church. The remaining sixty per cent of the AFC's funding during the past decade supported other key impact zones:

leadership and education, community ministries, Indigenous ministries, and sacred music and liturgical arts. These days, it's fair to say that AFC's funding extends well beyond bricks and mortar to foster a healthy, vibrant church.

Brubacher acknowledges that the first year of the pandemic presented funding challenges owing to the combination of fewer grant applications and the initial impact on AFC's investment portfolio. "2021, however, was a totally different story. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donor family – and the energy and creativity of our grant applicants – AFC had its most impactful year ever and gave more than

\$1 million in grants. Let's aim that high again in 2022!"

Brubacher is inspired by all the churches who are doing great work in uncertain times. "There are a lot of people finding courageous and creative ways to do good ministry, and for those who want to branch out, AFC is both a dependable and a hopeful partner. We believe in the vital importance of the Anglican church in our Canadian context, and we're here to invest in that!"

The deadline to apply for AFC's spring grant cycle is April 1, 2022. Visit www.anglicanfoundation.org/ apply for more information or email foundation@anglicanfoundation.org.



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The Rev'd Deacon Jane Morton and Vivian Cook pause for a photo on Christmas Eve at St. Mary's, Brandon.
Photo Credit: David Vail