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# The Mustard Seed.

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF BRANDON • A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL • JANUARY 2026

## BISHOP MEETS WITH ROMAN CATHOLICS AND LUTHERANS

The Rev'd Robert Parker  
Editor

This past October, Bishop Rachael was asked to be a representative for the Anglican Church of Canada on the ARC – B Dialogue Group. This is the long-standing gathering of Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops in Canada who meet twice a year to build relationships, discuss the ongoing conversations between our Churches, and to share in those areas of ministry where we find common ground.

Our Canadian bishops – Anglican and Roman Catholic alike – gather to further the ongoing local context of the International conversations which happen continuously through IARCCUM: International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission. For almost six decades the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion have been walking towards reconciliation.

In recognition that Jesus

did not intend for the Church to become a series of denominations each with their own mission but rather that the Church might be an instrument through which all Christ-followers might find ways to follow Christ, there have been Ecumenical Movements through the decades which have been working to draw people into dialogue, common purpose, and to seek the Holy Spirit's inspiration as we come closer to the purpose Jesus himself gave us in his commission to his disciples: that we might "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28.19)

The following is a quote from "Growing Together – Rome and Canterbury, 22-29 January 2024: The IARCCUM Bishops' Call: Our Common Witness, Calling and Commitment":

"As we have walked together, we have come to recognize each other as disciples of Jesus Christ

who love God and desire to be faithful to the lead of the Holy Spirit. With gratitude to God for the dignity and calling we each received in the waters of Baptism, we willingly proclaim that our communion in Christ is a source of joy and life. While that communion is not yet full, decades of rich theological dialogue, nourished by prayer for and with each other, have brought us to a place where the bonds which unite us are deep and profound. Yet in our churches we have barely begun to do all that it is possible to do together.

It is the task and mission of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) to build on the results of that dialogue, and 'to bridge the gap between the elements of faith we hold in common and the tangible expression of that shared belief in our ecclesial lives' (Growing Together in Unity and Mission #10). Mindful of God's sending us forth to engage in common witness, to

build relationships of friendship in Christ, to walk a synodal path together, and to share wherever possible in the Church's mission, IARCCUM brings together bishops from across the world where Anglicans and Catholics live together side by side in significant number."

Over the next continuing years, as Bishop Rachael continues in these dialogues, and others in the ecumenical world, it is the call of each our congregations to find ways to rectify the truth named by IARCCUM that our churches "have barely begun to do all that is possible." Together we are called to strive not for the Kingdom of the Anglican Church but rather for the Kingdom of God. As our Bishop grows and learns what it means to be truly in dialogue and seeking God's will in action, may each of our congregations join her in prayer and in practice as we bring the work of IARCCUM home to our own local communities.

### By The Rev'd Deacon Leon Millhouse

When Dean Don asked if I would be interested in representing St. Matthew's at the Brandon Ministerial Association, I had my doubts as I wasn't sure how it worked and my non familiarity with the various Church and help groups. I thought instead of my giving in to my biases, I should give it a try, which I did.

My first meeting seemed so strange as this was my introduction to something completely new. I was the only one there wearing a collar which didn't make any difference to those present. The Chairperson, Pastor Darrell, of McDiarmid Alliance Church, which all meetings so far are held, opened with greetings and our introducing ourselves, a Bible Passage which he

addressed. This was followed by groups of three (3) which in my case consisted of Pastor Michael of Calvary Temple and Pastor Andrew of the First Baptist Church. We prayed for each other and our Churches. Wow! This was certainly a new experience. I could feel my imaginary borders, which I put in place over the years, float away to be replaced with a sense of being part of and looking at those present much differently than when I arrived. What a wonderful feeling! General business followed and at the end I was welcomed by the many present. As time went on, I grew in appreciation of what those members are doing for our community of Brandon.

- Youth For Christ, getting young people

involved in growing toward Christ and helping carry the message to those prospective youths;

- Salvation Army with their various programs and services;
- Westman Drama with Children's programs;
- February Food Drive which all participate for Samaritan House;
- Good Friday Service at Westman Centennial Auditorium;
- Prayer walks;
- Prayer times, in which St. Matthew's will participate Fall of 2026;
- Shelters for the abused;

- Food, clothing and sleeping arrangements for street people;
- Pregnant support centre;
- Sports Centre;
- Christian Heritage School; and
- Various Churches are represented with their particular programs.

As you can see, there are many people involved in looking after the needy. I feel so fortunate to be part of such an ambitious group who are so willing to be helpful to those in need. They want to follow what Christ would have them do.

THE MAGI GAZE IN DEEP WONDER AT WHAT THEY SEE - HEAVEN ON EARTH, EARTH IN HEAVEN, MAN IN GOD, GOD IN MAN, ONE WHOM THE WHOLE UNIVERSE CANNOT CONTAIN, NOW ENCLOSED IN A TINY BODY. AS THEY LOOK, THEY BELIEVE AND NOT QUESTION, AS THEIR GIFTS BEAR WITNESS - INCENSE FOR GOD, GOLD FOR A KING, MYRRH FOR ONE WHO IS TO DIE.

SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

# A Word from the Bishop

## Happy New Year!

As 2026 begins, I cannot help but reflect on this past year and how many new relationships I have been blessed to begin. From seven brand new bishops across our country, five of whom are from our own Province of The Northern Lights, to meeting Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Bishops at the Arc – B Gathering, to finally meeting parishioners from every congregation within our Diocese of Brandon, I have been overwhelmed and overjoyed by the size and heart of the Family I am coming to know and appreciate as your Bishop.

While I am still very wet behind the ears, episcopally speaking, I am also aware that the Holy Spirit is generous in her gifts of community, shared learning, encouraging maturity, and just simply pushing us into the deep end trusting that we will be given proverbial water wings until we learn how to swim. We are all called – from still “new” bishop to longtime parishioners, to new inquirers joining our churches for the first time – to continue to seek to build new relationships.

Relationships are like flowers in a garden. Some spring up like wildflowers, seemingly wild and carefree, easy to tend and growing effortlessly. Others are willing to do the hard work of breaking through the cold, hard ground and into new and brilliant life like crocuses in the spring. Some relationships are a bit more finicky and need tender care and attention like a prize rosebush, while still others just seem to pop up overnight bringing joy and contentment like the daffodils and tulips of spring.

This coming year of 2026 brings with it the gift of the garden that is the Diocese of Brandon. In our garden we have parishes that are struggling and need some tender, loving care that goes above and beyond our usual attention. Some of our communities are growing like those proverbial weeds which are actually quite beautiful and bring possibilities we may take for granted, or struggle to understand. Many of our church families are the everyday flowers that make the gentle display of any good Manitoba garden, lending colours and scents that are easy to just pass by but



should actually draw us closer for a moment of pause, reflection, and appreciation. The garden that is our Diocese could be seen as a descendant of that original garden – the Garden of Eden – in which all that God created was answered by God’s own words “and it was good.”

Our Diocesan garden is one that is thriving in relationships: bishops, priests, deacons, lay leaders, parishioners, young, old, the wise and the innocent, Indigenous, Canadian settlers, new immigrants ... Each and every person who identifies as a member of our congregations is in relationship with all other parishioners. As a Diocese we need to find ways to celebrate, encourage, and enhance these relationships among our own faith communities, deaneries, archdeaconries, and diocese.

However, while we are Diocese of Brandon Anglicans, we are before all else, Christians. We are also called to intentionally build relationships with other Christians too! As we journey together through this Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty-Six we must become attentive to the ways the Spirit is calling us to recognize and relate with our siblings in Christ beyond our own Anglican Diocesan garden. This must become a year in which we continue to strengthen the bonds of affection with our United and Lutheran partners in communities such as Brandon (St. George’s, Anglican – Redeemer Lutheran), SUASM in Souris and NUASM in Neepawa, Swan River (Anglican & Lutheran) and Snow Lake (United & Anglican). Over the decades we have been learning, and often leading the way, as small towns

and communities live the Gospel Truth that we are all children of Creator and as such we are called to simply love one another. The challenging work of ecumenical ministry is work which we have been embracing for years.

It is my prayer and my hope that each and every clergy person, lay member, church, and community will either continue to expand their ecumenical relationships where they already exist, or begin doing the work of reaching out to the other Faith Communities within your own small towns, villages, and environments in the coming year. Clergy should be seeking out local ministerial meetings, or where none currently exist, inviting other ministers of other denominations to simply gather for coffee, conversation, communicating the needs of the greater community, and shared prayer. Our laity is encouraged to seek opportunities to serve with members of other churches by volunteering in local foodbanks or organizing drives for mittens and hats for children who may have none, or other creative ways which both bring people together and serve the community as well.

I invite members of our Diocese to send in photos and articles to the Mustard Seed each month of 2026 to share examples of ecumenical interactions and endeavours that illustrate your commitments to building relationships with ALL of God’s people from Churchill in the North, to Cartwright in the South, to Swan River in the West to MacGregor in the East.

May 2026 be the year that the Diocese of Brandon realizes our call to be members all of one Body – that Body which is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’s. By Christmas Eve this year may every one of our communities be able to honestly say, “we know our siblings in Christ by name: whether they be Roman Catholic, Orthodox, United, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Moravian, Baptist, Alliance, Pentecostal, Mennonite, those who have just begun a journey into the faith.” May this be the year when God can look down upon our Garden and say, “it is good. It is very good!”

## The Mustard Seed

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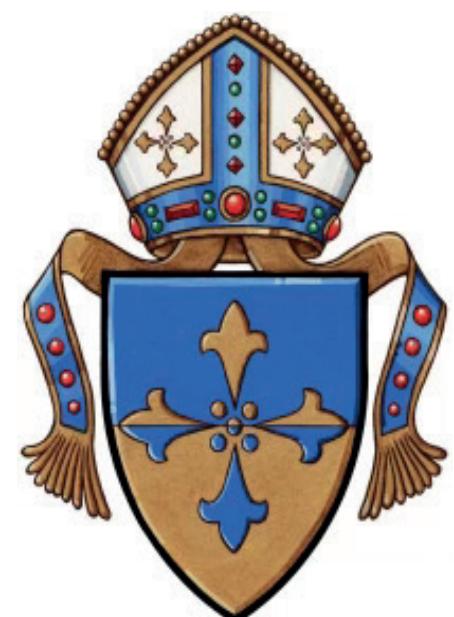
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### 2026 PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Issue	Deadline
Feb 2026	Jan 1, 2026
Mar 2026	Feb 1, 2026
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*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!



# Music Memories from St. Matthew's Cathedral

By Lynn Whidden and Edna Knock

Over its lifetime, (1907-2025), St. Matthew's has been a center for inspired music creation and enjoyment. The number of deeply moving performances are near countless but Edna Knock and Lynn Whidden recount the musical life of St. M's, a span of four decades. St. Matthew's, in traditional cathedral design, has the long nave, elevated sanctuary, large stained-glass windows with its high ceilings and just the right mixture of wall hangings and sculptures to create superb, soul enhancing acoustics.

Edna recalls a few music classics performed during her many years as Music Director. Of course, Mozart's Ave Verum was a favorite as was almost any choral work of Johannes Brahms. Memorable was Schubert Mass in G Major with singing support by violin and the cathedral's majestic Casavant pipe organ. Edna even took care to have the work consistently sung in German. The Bach cantatas were among Edna's favorites but one cantata, Bach's Mass in B Minor, the Easter Cantata, stands

out. The Choir was accompanied by an orchestra of eight musicians from Brandon University. When the work was finished, an audience member exclaimed that. "We have never heard music like that!" Another said, "Everybody loved it!"

Indeed, the sound of music in St. Matthew's is special and so were the occasions it accompanied. The atmospheric Advent service of Lessons and Carols, often accompanied by harpist Anne Germani. The joyous Christmas and Easter anthems aged through the centuries; and all the great services: the consecrations of Bishops; the countless ordinations of clergy; the installation of so many Deans, births, deaths and all the life events, all were marked with fine choral music.

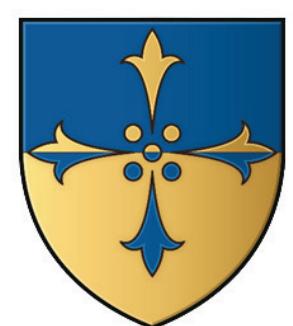
While most people find music deeply rewarding not all are equally gifted. Church choirs to the rescue! For here everyone is accepted and encouraged to join, to learn, and to experience the joy of doing music together no matter

their talent. While singing gives us personal health, it also develops social health. Singing connects people in a profound way as did the parties that followed the performances! On several occasions the post-event celebrations were in the country homes of Nora and Dr. Dick Parker, and Mary Louise and Dr. Jack Perkins where we continued to sing around the piano joined by music lovers Dean Robin Walker and his wife Joanne. Jean and Vicar General Paul Curtis must be mentioned for good musical times too.

While singing enriches all choristers in so many ways, little did we know that for a few it was to be strong training for a future career in music or music-related employment. Judith Macdonald was a career church musician and contributes to this day with her clear soprano voice. Ken Nichols was the tenor who never sang a wrong note, but best of all, he composed music for St. Matthew's. Ken's Mass was a favorite choice excellent organist and later choir director, Arthur Bower. There are too many to list, although

Hugh Fraser's operatic career comes to mind, but it must be stated that many University of Brandon music students polished their skills singing in St. Matthew's Choir. They continue to do so under the capable leadership of the current music director, Jai Zhang, who is envisioning an ongoing and great music future for St. Matthew's.

Another essay is needed to mention the many instrumentalists and performances such as those in the Te Deum concert series. Edna and Lynn would like to hear from all of you... Is it time for a grand St. Matthew's music reunion?



THEY WERE OVERJOYED AT SEEING THE STAR, AND ON ENTERING THE HOUSE THEY SAW THE CHILD WITH MARY HIS MOTHER. THEY PROSTRATED THEMSELVES AND DID HIM HOMAGE. THEN THEY OPENED THEIR TREASURES AND OFFERED HIM GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH. MATTHEW 2:10-11

## Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

### Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

#### Diocese of Brandon

Let us Pray Video On Demand

We are pleased to present Let us Pray on the third Monday of each month. Our focus for each month is Life in all its fullness.

It's not always possible to attend each monthly presentation of Let Us Pray, or maybe you really enjoyed a certain presenter and you'd like to see them again maybe even share them with someone else. Well, now you can!

Edited recordings of our sessions are made available to you online approximately one week after the original live session. These videos do not contain any personal details of participants, but will isolate the presentation portion of the session. They are great for a second viewing, or for use in your parish, deanery or Diocese. They are a perfect resource for a prayer gathering any time it suits your schedule.

Be sure to watch or next Let Us Pray this January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026. As we move into 2026, we are pleased to begin the year of "Life in all its fulness" with Bishop John Watton of Central Newfoundland. Bishop Watton's presentation begins at 12:00 noon Manitoba time!

Join us at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89192823143>

Zoom Meeting ID: 891 9282 3143

For more information call Barry+ at 1-204-647-0400 or email [barrykn@zoho.com](mailto:barrykn@zoho.com)

# News From the Cathedral

By Bishop Rachael Parker

## A Cathedral Update

Over the past several months, our Dean Chris Everts has been working diligently with the Cathedral Congregation to bring renewal to the Mother Church of our Diocese. As Restoring Hope continues to gain momentum, the changes in the air are palpable and appropriate for a new year as new beginnings in God's Kingdom are coming about. Restoring Hope is a mindset which encourages people within and outside the Cathedral Congregation to get excited about the work of Jesus in their midst. At the moment, most of that mindset is being driven by physical changes, upheaval, a bit of chaos, and a whole lot of smiles as changes bring with them innovative ideas, possibilities, and plans to serve Jesus, right here in the Cathedral proper!

In the recognition that their church building was meant to serve both their own Sunday congregation and the Anglicans in our Diocese, the St. Matthew's folks opened their hearts to the truth that the Church – and the Cathedral – are for all God's

children, on Sundays and every moment in between. Restoring Hope is a multi-year plan to centre our Anglican Diocesan Centre and St. Matthew's itself on the truth that our existence is all about ensuring that Jesus is at the center of all that we do. From Sunday and Wednesday Eucharists, to Diocesan Synod services and ordinations, from meetings of the Church at Work to Bible Studies and opening the doors to the community in which the Cathedral stands as a home of hospitality, Restoring Hope is a living Covenant between the St. Matthew's Cathedral Congregation and the Diocese of Brandon to dream big, work hard, and pray faithfully, that together we might help to Restore Hope in our own communities and those with whom we interact.

The most pressing aspects of this process are the physical structures we need to put in place to ensure that all of God's people are welcome, safe, and can actually access the Cathedral. Much work has been done already. From installing a chair lift from the nave to the basement and our new fully accessible washroom,

to preparations for an outdoor ramp into the Cathedral in the garden space near the Anglican Centre entrance, the Dean and Vestry of St. Matthew's have been hard at work preparing the "foundations" of the new Cathedral being prepared. This 'new' Cathedral won't be physically new, but it is already becoming spiritually renewed as more and more possibilities are being realized.

These pictures show the 'old' space with beautiful pews and a hearkening back to the way things were ... but they also show a couple of examples of life being lived in new ways in forms of the nave set up for a Family Celebration with cupcakes and beverages and seating for all, and the transformation of the space as a place of learning and community as it was shared with the Brandon General Museum and Archives presentation of the story of the old Prince Edward Hotel. Because the pews have been removed and comfortable (and movable) chairs have been placed, the Cathedral can now welcome more people from more walks of life to gather and share community writ

large.

Eventually we will be able to host meals and conferences with nave-level accessible washrooms and a kitchenette. The work that is envisioned is work that will benefit the Cathedral Congregation, and every member of our Diocese. It will also allow us to serve Jesus as we welcome people for meal programmes, homework clubs, Seniors' gatherings, guest speakers, concerts, and more than we could ask or imagine! At this moment though, we ask your prayers and support for the very thing that protects the foundation – the Cathedral roof! It is in much need of immediate repairs that will also allow us to protect the Pipe Organ from leaks. We sincerely ask that you pray regularly for the Cathedral and our roof and, if you feel so inspired, to find some small ways in your own congregations to raise a few funds to help the Cathedral keep the roof 'raised' above the pipe organ – and new chairs – so that All of God's Children can feel the reality of Restoring Hope with the Cathedral Community.



**Above:** A presentation with a group.



**Above:** Chairs for Sunday service.



**Left:** The Nave before the pews were removed.

**Above:** A private party.

## The Children's Corner – A New Feature in The Mustard Seed

We often hear people say that children and young people are the future of the Church. Yes! However, they are not just the Future, those who are present with us are also the Present Tense of the Church.

We spend a lot of time considering how we can serve the long-standing members of our communities. We speak about stewardship as we remind people to make their monthly offering. We focus most of our attention on those who have been in the church for years. The truth is that we need to focus just as much on those we HOPE will be with us for years!

Every month we will share an idea, a thought, a suggestion for how each of our congregations can begin building these important relationships with the youngest of our members.

One simple idea: If you find you're sitting in front of a child and they can't see, lean to the side, encourage them to stand on their pew – carefully! – or invite them to join you in your pew.

If you have ideas, suggestions, stories about children in church, please send them in! The Mustard Seed is the paper of all our generations.



# From the National Church to the Church National

## From “National Church” to “Church National” by Bishop Rachael

After General Synod in June, I have been thinking a great deal about the role and relationship our “National” Church has with our Diocese and Parishes. As this was my first General Synod, I found old assumptions being set aside and new possibilities being considered. With the election of our new and short-time Primate, I became aware that the Holy Spirit does indeed expect us to react and respond quickly and not always do we have time to slow down, reflect, discern, and contemplate. But the biggest questions I realized were these: what assumptions, predispositions, expectations do I have of the National Church? Are they fair? Necessary? Correct? And if not, what next?

Well, what next is to revisit, reimagine, and open my heart and mind to what the relationship between National Church and our Diocese might be.

At House of Bishops in October, Primate Shane Parker asked that we all might reconsider our thought processes and our assumptions. His first request was that we might start referring to “National Church” as “Church National” that we might reframe our thoughts and really engage in the possibilities of what could be when we assume right relationship with Church House, General Synod and all that Church National might entail.

As part of that “reconsidering,” our new General Secretary Dr. Andrea Mann shared a reflection at COGS, or Council of General Synod. The Right Reverend John Walton shared this reflection on Facebook, and I am sharing it with you third hand. Give it a read and some consideration. Then ask yourself if this has helped you think differently about who the Church National is and could be, or has it helped you to understand something you didn’t even know about before?

What is Church House? Who is Church House?

## 1. Church House and a Brief History

Over time, the term “Church House”

has referred to more than one thing. It has been used for both the 600 Jarvis Street location and, for the past 21 years, the building at 80 Hayden Street in Toronto.

For many years, “Church House” mainly referred to the physical office building. People would say, “I’ll meet you at Church House,” and mean the bricks-and-mortar location where national work was done.

Today, when we refer to Church House, we are talking about the community of staff who serve the church’s national ministry. ... I’d like to offer a snapshot of the people and their work in that place.

So what is Church House, or rather who is church house?

At present, Church House is made up of 37 full-time and part-time staff, at a ratio of roughly 2.5 to 1. We are:

- Women, men, and non-binary
- A workforce that is interracial, interreligious, Indigenous, and non-indigenous, interethnic, and interlinguistic
- Inclusive of different genders and abilities
- A team with a wide range of ages, including several individuals who have served more than 30 years, and many who have served more than 10

Some of us live just a 15-minute walk from 80 Hayden. Others commute up to 90 minutes each way. We are still a somewhat hybrid workplace and so there are staff who also work remotely.

We are a highly professional workforce: accountants, writers, IT experts, archivists, theologians, clergy, lay, journalists, administrators, designers, scholars, hospitality specialists, builders, problem-solvers, photographers, videographers, and more. Most of us are the only person doing the job we do, and all of us have duties as assigned.

It is a community that brings deep commitment to the mission of the Church and deep care and compassion for one another. A community shaped by previous renewal efforts.

Many Church House members have lived through earlier efforts at renewal and restructuring—

including Preparing the Way, adopted by the 1995 General Synod, and, now 30 years later, the recent mandate received this summer in Creating Pathways for the Transformational Change of General Synod.

Staff have participated in many conversations over the years—offering their insights, raising questions, and giving feedback during times of change. They have adapted and worked through it all.

### A TIME OF CHANGE

A new moment - This moment, however, feels different.

Church House is in a state of heightened awareness.

Some of us are openly relieved and excited—eager to contribute and hopeful about positive transformation. Others are quietly anxious—concerned about their livelihoods, about the loss of friends, community, and meaningful work. And across the board, there is a shared desire:

to be informed and genuinely included as the work the wider transformation unfolds.

### 2. Recent Changes and Current Work

So—what has been happening with Church House over the summer and into the autumn start of this new triennium?

There will be more later (during the COGS meeting) from Janet and Andrew regarding the formation of the Pathways Teams. For now, I can say that the Pathway 2 Team—Management Overview and Restructuring, which is of particular importance to Church House, is close to being fully formed. Almost all coordinating and standing committees have met at least once this triennium and have taken part in an orientation to the Creating Pathways mandate—organized and led by senior staff.

Interest is high. So is curiosity. There is willingness to consider new approaches and different roles. Where there is trepidation, there is also trust.

Continuing the work of the national office

Meanwhile, day-to-day ministry continues. Church House has carried its usual summer workload into the autumn season, supporting:

- governance processes
- research and records inquiries
- national, multi media communications
- visitors and guests
- financial administration
- project continuation and/or completion from the previous triennium, and
- many other activities that enable the life and witness of the Anglican Church of Canada locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally

In other words: transformation is underway, but ministry has not paused.

### 3. Developments for 2026

As Archbishop Shane has stated on numerous occasions, including the town hall Church House meeting in late October This triennium is not “business as usual.”

Every aspect of Church House work will continue to be examined and informed by the recommendations of Pathways teams, resource realities, and the insights, questions, recommendations of staff themselves.

Communicate, connect, and convene is now our operational mantra. Staff, volunteers, and committees are prepared to closely examine what these core areas of work might actually mean in concrete terms going forward.

These are also difficult and emotional times. Restructuring and rightsizing always is. Some existing offices or departments may disappear as we lean into rationalized integration, reorganization, and cost benefit analyses for improved ministry. The newly integrated Office of the Primate and the General Secretary is a case in point. There are other possibilities for integration that will, we believe, lead to what the church national requires of its national office in sustainable ways.

Continued from Page 5

Staff numbers will continue to reduce. Our work area configurations within 80 Hayden will change. These decisions are necessary. We are grateful for your prayers for Church House, as Church House prays for you and the work of this Council.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, these past several months have been busy—at times like standing in front of a fire hose. But a foundation is being prepared. A foundation for what comes next.

A foundation for the transformation upon us and before us.

Church House—the people who serve the national office—remain committed, engaged, and hopeful. We step into 2026 with

clarity about the challenges and with faith in the opportunities for renewal. Stay tuned, and thank you.

As your Bishop, I am committed to serving with and for you in ways that lead us ever closer to Christ, and we do that by working together with all our partners in ministry. The Church National is one of our significant partners. Together we will pray. Together we will seek. Together we will serve. I sincerely ask that you hold our Church House staff from Church National in your prayers as they step forward in faith for those opportunities for renewal which will also enhance and encourage our Church Local in the Diocese of Brandon.

And on a side note: Our new General Secretary, Dr. Andrea

Mann is a gift to our Church. Pray for her as you pray for our Primate, The Most Reverend Shane Parker. Thank you and God bless.



St. George's Anglican/Redeemer Lutheran held their annual Hanging of the Greens service on Advent 1. Here are a few of the youngsters in the parish putting an ornament on the tree while the congregation sings "O Christmas Tree

## News From Around the Diocese

### MacGregor and Austin

St. Paul's in MacGregor and Christ Church in Austin are two little communities on the edge of the diocese. Since about 2010 they have shared church buildings, St. Paul's church is used for most of the year and Christ Church is used each year in August. Several times in conversation around town it has come up that people have thought our little churches were closed.

We meet on Sunday Morning, we do ecumenical services with other churches, but many people see a church

only as the building, when they don't see it open, they believe the church is closed. We are a small church community; our people are involved with our greater community in many ways but our church buildings have been mainly been used for services, a time when many people are not out and about. It is easy to understand why some see us as closed.

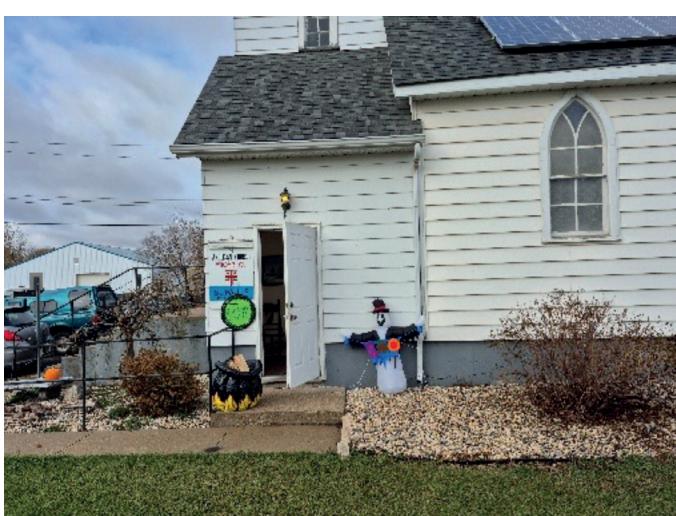
We are trying to change this perception. This year on Halloween we opened St. Paul's church for the first time for children to come for "trick or treat." Although we didn't have much of a turn out, (our

timing was off) we will try again next year. We would also like to try to open the church on the night of the Santa Claus Parade as the church is right on the Parade route.

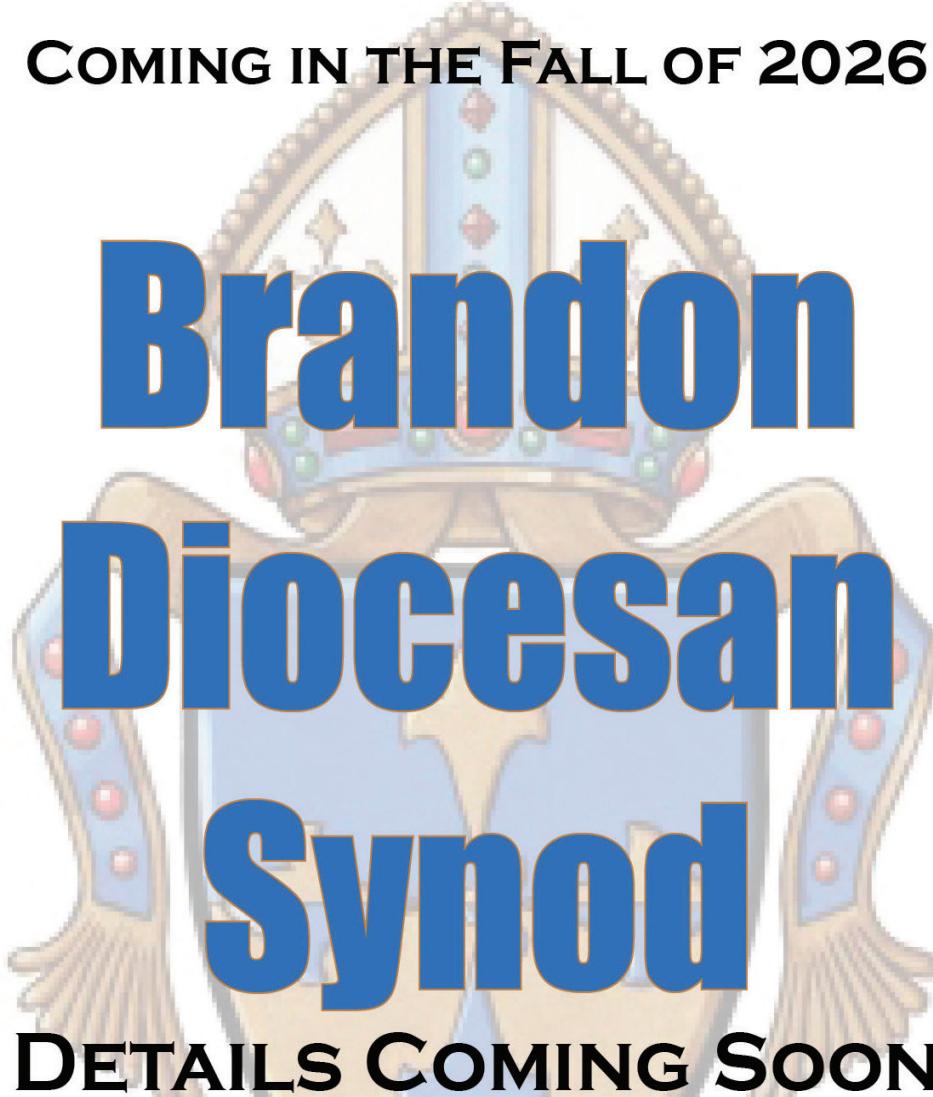
In Christ Church we are opening for a bible study the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month. We are having good attendance from the Austin community. We are also planning the first "Lessons and Carols service" the church has had in over 15 years this Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> in the evening.

We know that the church is the people but we have been given

these buildings as a gift from our past siblings in Christ and from God. We will continue to try new ways to reach out to the community and use the churches in any new ways we can to accomplish God's work. Our goal is that people know that God's house is open and his church within is an open accepting place where people can find God's love.



**COMING IN THE FALL OF 2026**



# **Brandon Diocesan Synod**

**DETAILS COMING SOON**

**SEPTEMBER 24TH TO 26TH, 2026  
ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL  
BRANDON, MANITOBA**

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5,6 NIV

As this new year of 2026 unfolds, you are invited to prepare yourselves, your Congregations, your Communities for our Diocesan Synod. In late September we will gather representatives from every congregation to worship, pray, learn, discuss, debate, listen, speak, and discern the work God is calling our Diocese to fulfill in the triennium of 2026-2029.

As you prepare for your Annual General Meetings please prayerfully consider which members of your community might be called by God to serve at Synod, on Committees, or in other opportunities the Holy Spirit may inspire. Please also consider the very real commitments to your time and energy as you discern whether you are called to represent your Parish.

Synod will be held from Thursday to Saturday, 24-26 of September. As a Synod delegate it is important that you are able to attend all aspects of our gathering. This may mean taking some time off work or school. It may mean travelling to Brandon in time for the opening of Synod and being prepared to travel home following the conclusion of Synod. If you are chosen to be a delegate, please ensure that you consider these logistics before you agree to serve. We cannot faithfully do the work of the Church if the Members of Synod are not present for its entirety.

If you are chosen to be a delegate, please also consider whether you have the wherewithal to serve on the Diocesan Executive Committee prior to coming to Synod. Our meetings are held several times a year and are held via Zoom, in Brandon, and in The Pas at least once per year. Should you be elected to the Diocesan Executive Committee this is a three-year commitment as you will be representing the Church in decision making between Synods. This is a significant role and should be undertaken with that in mind.

While Synods are the opportunity for the Church in the world to gather together in one place to discern and form the decision-making process for the Diocese, they are also wonderful opportunities for joyful worship, gatherings of new and old friends, learning, sharing, discovering, and celebrating who we are as Children of Creator, siblings in Christ, and the do-ers of the Holy Spirit's work in the world. Please do consider becoming your Parish delegate to this year's Synod!

## From the Editor of the Mustard Seed

### From the Editor:

I want to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the Mustard Seed this past year. It has been an effort to get the paper out on time, but one that I find to be very satisfying, so thanks again for all your help with content. Please keep it coming.

As many have figured out, in the September issue, we went from four pages to eight pages. I also know that some of you are frustrated with me about what you sent in not appearing in the paper, I understand your frustration, I really do. That is a big reason we expanded the paper to eight pages. I believe that I have cleared out any submissions that I was holding on to because there was not room or there were other important events

that needed to be published.

That being said...

I desperately need your submissions, and there should be no more hold ups in publishing. Please don't think that what you do in your parish as too small for the paper. It's not and I as the Editor want to put it in the paper. It would be even better if I had so much to put in, that we had to go to 12 pages!

I could only hope we had those kind of problems!

#### Things to consider:

I am looking for events, dinners, fundraisers, sales, special services like baptisms, confirmations, Bishop's visits, but also things like a review of a good book, a theological reflection, or if you write poetry.

For those who preach, perhaps a sermon that you wish to share.

Please submit articles using Microsoft Word as it is the easiest and quickest to format. For photos, please save them in a JPEG/JPG format if possible, and send them as another attachment to the email and not embedded in the Word document. For photos of dinner / potlucks / people eating, please ask them to look at the camera/phone because if you don't all I get to put in the paper is the back of people's heads.

If you look in the paper, right next to Bishop Rachael's message on page 2, you will see the publishing schedule. It states that I need things into me by the first of the month, however, if I can get them in the last week of the month would be even better as it gives me

more time to set the paper.

Send them to:

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

or

[navypadrehalifax@gmail.com](mailto:navypadrehalifax@gmail.com)

Once again, thank you so very much for contributing to the continued success of the Mustard Seed and look forward to seeing what you send into the paper!

**NOTE** - We are always 6 to 8 weeks behind, so if you send in anything, it will appear in the paper 2 months from the event.

**NOTE** - We cannot publish photos of minors without a parent's or guardian's consent, an email stating that consent was given is perfectly fine.

THE MAGI EXPERIENCED LONGING... THEY WERE ALL TOO FAMILIAR WITH, AND WERE WEARY OF THE HERODS OF THEIR OWN DAY.  
BUT THERE, IN BETHLEHEM WAS A PROMISE OF NEWNESS, OF GRATUITY.

POPE FRANCIS

## The Companions Program September 2026 – June 2027

**T**he **residential Companions** program is an immersive opportunity to experience a contemporary monastic community rooted in the Benedictine tradition. It is open to women aged 21 and up regardless of Christian denomination.

Companions live, work, and pray alongside the sisters, learning from them but also sharing each companion's own gifts with the sisters and their ministries. They will:

- ❖ Learn to cultivate peaceful and creative ways of living in a diverse intentional community
- ❖ Appreciate silence and solitude as well as community and service for a healthy life
- ❖ Put down deep roots of spiritual intimacy with God and each other
- ❖ Develop a personal path to ongoing spiritual growth



**Application start & end (both programs):**  
January 1, 2026 – May 1, 2026



**Cost:**

**Residential Companions:** sugg. \$150/month.

**Companions Online:** sugg. \$100/month.

If cost is a hindrance, assistance is available.

**O**pen to women of all Christian expressions, **Companions Online** is an opportunity to become "monastics in the world," living a Benedictine rhythm of prayer, work, study, and recreation. Online Companions learn to develop practices that support and nurture their spiritual life from the comfort of their homes.

They meet regularly for classes and discussion groups, and commit to times of personal prayer at home. They share in book studies, participate in online worship and sometimes screen a film relevant to spiritual growth and self-understanding. Online Companions also develop spiritual disciplines that follow the liturgical year.

**To learn more about either program, or to apply, email:**

Canon Sr. Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD, at  
[companions@ssjd.ca](mailto:companions@ssjd.ca), or phone St. John's Convent:  
416-226-2201, ext. 304

# The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine