

ἄνθρωπος ὁ σπέρμα ἄνθρωπος

The Mustard Seed.

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"What I Did On My Summer Vacation"

Text and photos by the Rev'd Dr. Paul Shore
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Editor's Note: This article is the text of a sermon preached at St. Matthew's Cathedral on Sunday, September 4th. Welcome home, Paul! We're thrilled to have you back.

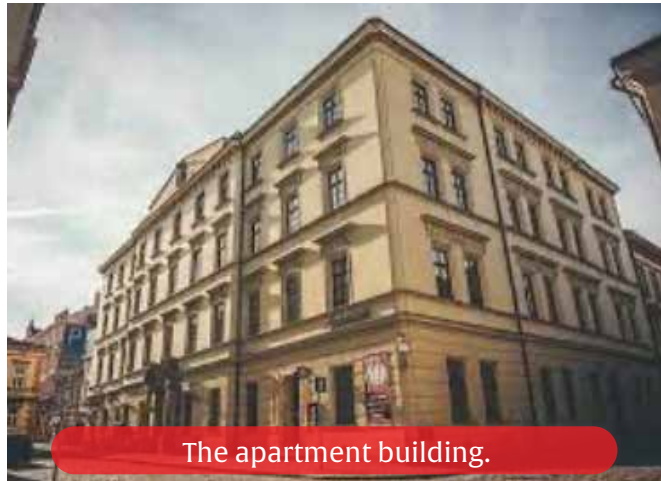
It has been almost 7 months to the day since I left Brandon in the midst of a record snowstorm and flew from Winnipeg to the heart of central Europe, where I have been based until a few weeks ago. I promise that I will not subject you to an account of "What I did on my summer vacation," but the Dean has persuaded me that saying a few words about the past months might be not a waste of your time.

Let me begin by saying that without exception, in the six countries I visited, I was treated everywhere with kindness and generosity, even by those whose own lives were hemmed in by many difficulties. Each day we see in the news the foolish and indeed wicked things that some people are doing in the world. It is easy to see this as the inevitable norm. But there are Good Samaritans everywhere, and the crisis of Covid and the shadow of war have not hardened their hearts. There are many stories that demonstrate this: here is one.

While in Beirut I slipped and fell in the hotel bathroom during one of the frequent blackouts that hit the city. This is in itself no big deal, but when I returned to my home base in the Czech Republic I was in increasing discomfort and finally had to go to the hospital in an ambulance with lights flashing and siren wailing. When I got out, I was flat on my back, lying in my apartment, friends and family thousands of miles away. Two women from the university where I was working, one a secretary, and the other a junior faculty member, came to see me. They brought food and medicine, cooked me a meal, and kept me company. As I lay there, I could see the words of Matthew 25:36 in front of my eyes: *"I was sick and you came to visit me."*

These women would not accept repayment for the things they brought. I call them my "Czech Angels." A third, different sort of "Angel" is the Chair of the university department that hosted me. Tall as a grenadier, with a persuasive tone of voice, he made it clear to staff when I was once more in a hospital emergency room, that the "Professor from Canada" required attention, and then kept me amused in the waiting area until my turn came.

So much for angels. But along with angels, there are also those who bring war. It is necessary to speak about two wars, one of years past and one going on now.



The apartment building.

In Beirut a terrible war was fought over thirty years ago, but there are still signs and consequences of it everywhere. Stoplights do not work, infrastructure is still seriously damaged, and the people struggle from day to day. This much I expected when I went there. What I did not expect was the connection of this shattered modern cityscape to the world of the Gospels.

If you ever get to go to Jerusalem, you will see unforgettable things, whether it's the shadowy Via Dolorosa or the inspiring Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But what you will not see is the beleaguered, occupied city in which Jesus walked and taught. Jerusalem today is a major tourist destination, a place that, while in a danger zone, is most likely to be preserved because of the many financial and political interests that need it to be preserved. Beirut has no such protectors. It is a city that has known violence and destruction, much of which is still shockingly visible, and whose inhabitants worry about further violence and destruction. In this way modern Beirut's inhabitants resemble the people whom Jesus encountered in Jerusalem. They worried about their families, about further danger to their city, and they were not wrong to have this worry, for as we know, four decades after Jesus' ministry, Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Romans. I had not expected to make this connection, but it now seems to me that in order to understand better the Jerusalem of Jesus' time, I had to go to the Beirut of today.

In Beirut I also had a curious experience which, upon reflection, seems a metaphor for much bigger things. I had gone to Beirut to look at an old manuscript preserved in a library there. The librarians, like everyone else in that city, were more than helpful, and when my business there was done, I decided for some reason to walk back to my hotel. I'd gone along for some time when I found myself ascending a road with huge coils of concertina wire on each side; at the top was a small doorway in the middle of what looked like a high steel wall, with

armed guards.

I thought, Paul, this was a poor choice of route! Going forward seemed like risking detention or worse. But turning back and walking down the hill seemed like an even better way to attract the guards' attention. So, after a flutter of real fear, I kept going, a solitary, bespectacled man, a foreigner, briefcase in hand. I walked right through the gate and got back to my hotel. It probably doesn't sound like much in the telling, but it was a reminder of the words of Matthew 7:7 - *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."*

There is also a war going on in Europe right now, the biggest war on that continent in almost 80 years. Let me tell you what I have learned about this war. We in the English-speaking world tend to hear one version of things. The Ukrainians defending their homeland have demonstrated valour, resolve and resourcefulness for which they deserve always to be remembered. But we in North America can easily forget that the struggle in Ukraine is not merely between Ukraine and Russia, one of which must "win." Rather than only asking whether Ukraine or Russia is "winning," we should also be asking if Vladimir Putin is winning, which is quite a different question. Throughout history there have been dictators who sent their soldiers into other peoples' countries to kill – and to die-- and have brought their own countries to the brink of destruction. But the leaders themselves often do not suffer – they may even prosper. It is more than possible that Russia will in some ways "lose" this war, but that Mr. Putin will still be the real winner, having established an even tighter grip over his people and having amassed even greater riches, while elevating his prestige among those who admire bullies and tyrants. This must never be forgotten.

Now comes the hardest part of the things I want to tell you about. Each of us strives to be Christian, and each of us is a fallible human being. Among our brethren in the Orthodox Christian world is a great turmoil and controversy because the Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill, has endorsed and praised this war, not the least because he sees it as a way of keeping recognition and acceptance of gay and transgender people out of his home country, Russia. I cannot say if his motivation is primarily an innate hatred of those who are different from him, or whether he is cowed or co-opted by the regime in Russia – or if all these things play a role in his public pronouncements.

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A Word From Our Bishop

I have tried to start this note several times, but the words wouldn't come. My mind is too full of the sights and sounds, the worship and the prayer of Lambeth. I want to reflect with you on the experience of the Lambeth Conference, and the return to the Diocese. I have learned a great deal about the church, about the Anglican Communion and about our place in it. I give thanks for the people of Brandon and for their faithfulness and I rejoice with you that we had such a magnificent presence at the conference through the wonderful work of Nadia Sinclair as a Steward and through the exquisite work of Ida Head and the beaded crosses which were given as gifts to those focused on reconciliation and racial equality.

Much ink has been spilled over the politics of the pre-Lambeth period, and the decisions around the "Lambeth Calls". Each call is a statement of commitment of the dioceses of the Anglican Communion to work toward the intended goals set out in each of the calls. The calls covered: Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Anglican Identity, Reconciliation, Human Dignity, Environment and Sustainable Development, Christian Unity, Inter-Faith Relations, Discipleship and finally, Science and Faith. The final texts of these calls which were worked on this summer will be made public as this year unfolds.



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

In the controversies that developed in the days up to Lambeth I had to observe that the press did not seem to be attending the same conference I was. What I heard on my phone and through texts and tweets and messages did not match with the conversations and goodwill I had experienced around me.

What I experienced was very much an breaking through of the Holy Spirit into a group that was seeking to find a way together to give witness to Jesus Christ in all the varied contexts we faced. It looked to me like to those who were looking to find a path forward, the Lord supplied one through the wise intervention and teaching of the Archbishop of Canterbury. I have come away from Lambeth with a sense of gratitude for our church and its mission and through the whole world.

There are parts of the communion that look nothing like us. There are parts of the communion that look

similar, and there are parts of the communion with whom we share the day to day struggles of our work in the kingdom. But one thing was made very plain to me, and that was that we are all seeking of the will of God to serve in our culture, our community and in spite of the history which we carry with us every day.

We face many challenges in the Diocese of Brandon. But we are blessed beyond measure that we have the faithful laity and clergy working together for the good of the kingdom right where we are. We have many challenges to face, not least of which is the development of clergy resources and getting people whom God has called to step forward in faith and serve. I am confident that the Lambeth Calls, when they are published will help us in a way forward on Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Anglican Identity, Reconciliation, Human Dignity, Environment and Sustainable Development, Christian Unity, Inter-Faith Relations, Discipleship and, Science and Faith.

I thank you all for the privilege of serving as your bishop and representing you at Lambeth and I was proud to tell the story of the Diocese of Brandon and our desire to walk the reconciling path together in Christ Jesus.

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!

Welcome, Jacob!



Lt Jacob Friesen in his official military photo.

Avid readers of the Mustard Seed will remember that in the summer of 2021, the Tri-Valley Parish hosted a theological student, Lt Jacob Friesen. He served for three months in the parish, assisting the Rector in worship and getting to know the parish in preparation for a potential curacy in the Diocese of Brandon following the completion of his Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from Trinity College, Toronto in May of 2022.

Since his virtual first placement in the Diocese, Jacob has completed his M.Div. with a second placement at St. Michael and All Angels', Toronto under the Ven. Paul Feheley as well as his basic military officers' training course at St. Jean, Quebec this past summer, where he was the pennant bearer for his platoon at his graduation parade.

He has now arrived (alongside his fiancée Sam) in the Diocese of Brandon, and Jacob will serve in the Diocese as the Assistant Curate at the Cathedral under the watchful eye of the Very Rev'd Don Bernhardt TSSF.

At the time of publication in September, a date for Jacob's ordination to the diaconate has not been set, but God willing, this will happen in short order. More to come.

Welcome to the Diocese of Brandon, Jacob and Sam! We're absolutely thrilled that you're here with us.

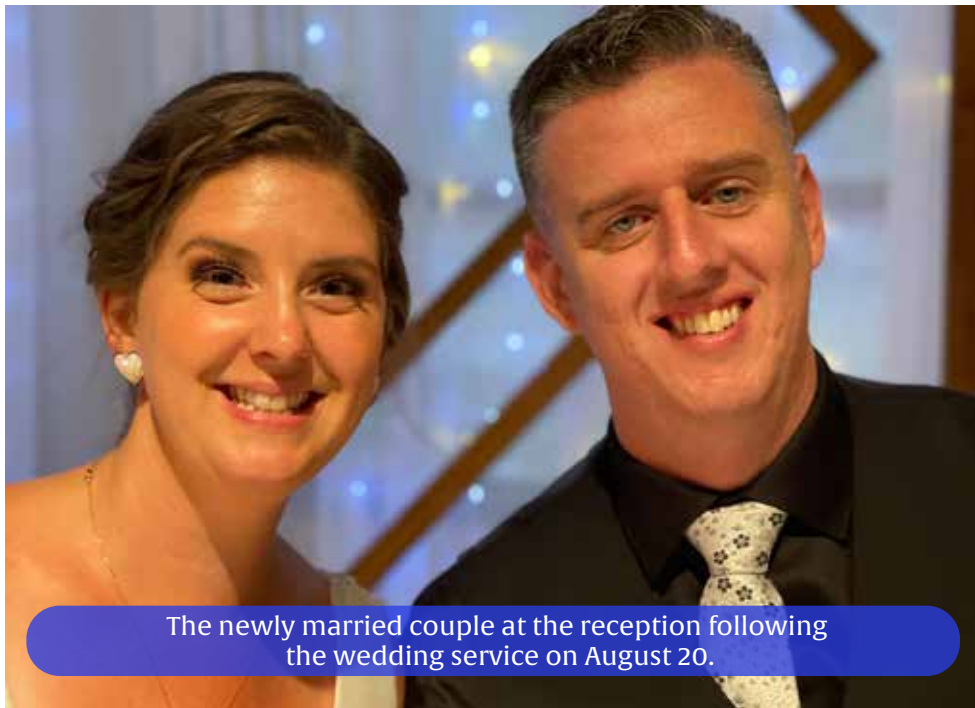
News from the Pews

PELTY PLAINS PARISH as submitted by the Editor

Congratulations to Captain the Reverend Chris Pilon on his marriage to Kenna Nelson in Regina on August 20th.

Members of the Diocese of Brandon participated in the wedding service held in Kenna's home church. The Bishop preached, the Rev'd Matt Koovisk provided music (alongside some of Kenna's friends), and the Rev'd Chris Evetts read the first reading from Ecclesiastes 4. All three clergy from the Diocese of Brandon that participated in the service had been at Huron College with the groom.

Congratulations Chris and Kenna! May God grant you both many years together.



The newly married couple at the reception following the wedding service on August 20.



A shot from the rehearsal the night before.

THE TRI-VALLEY PARISH/ST. MARY'S, VIRDEN as submitted by the Editor

A parish priest spends a lot of time in their office at the church. I have found that in my own ordained ministry, more often than not, people stop in because "they have seen my car out front of the church." This is good, as it establishes that the church is a safe place to spend some time. At St. Mary's, Virden, we're blessed that we have a modern parish hall alongside a historical church, all situated among a churchyard that is the biggest in town (well, it's really the only one, but no matter.)

From time to time, though, offices need to be refreshed, especially if the occupant spends a good amount of time working away. At the time of writing, the rector's office at St. Mary's is undergoing some painting. When that's done, the plan is to add a new desk in the corner, along with some chairs so that the rector can hold small meetings. Photos to come in the next edition of *the Mustard Seed*!



The Rector's office in October 2020. Excuse the mess.



The Rector's office as it waits to be painted.

"What I Did On My Summer Vacation" (continued from front page)



A military checkpoint in Beirut, Lebanon

I also acknowledge that it is very easy to criticize the actions of Vladimir Putin while in the middle of Manitoba, thousands of miles from the Kremlin, but nonetheless, Kirill's actions – which have been rejected and denounced by many Orthodox clergy – remind us of the grave dangers of rendering unto Caesar far more than is his due.

The risk of perverting the real message of the Gospel is not a particularly Russian problem. It is found everywhere. Patriotism or paranoia may lead us to reject mercy, love and acceptance. The lure of being close to those in power can be very seductive. Again, the seventh chapter of Matthew sets forth the truth: "...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Perhaps this may seem too hard, but sometimes if we know the direction we should go, and just keep going, we can pass along the narrow way, and through the straight gate. And perhaps in this journey upward, there is just a bit of resemblance to this path and gate to the door at the top of the fortified hill in Beirut that one simply has to be brave – or foolish-- enough to keep walking straight through.

A Trip to "The Old Post"

Text and photo by the Ven. Dr. Kara Mandryk

Archdeacon for Ministry & Training and Coordinator, Henry Budd College for Ministry



In late August, Keith (my husband) and I had the honour of visiting "The Old Post" on Cedar Lake. This was the traditional community site for the people of the Chemawawin Cree Nation. Their territory was flooded by Manitoba Hydro in the early 1960's to make way for the Grand Rapids generating station. About 202,343 hectares of land was flooded, changing the land and the waters and the plant and animal habitat of Cedar Lake forever. The community was relocated in 1964 to the south shore of Cedar Lake – a completely inferior place for traditional and community living due to poor soil and lack of resources.

The Anglican Church established a mission on what

is now called "The Old Post" in the early 20th century. The church contributed much to the life of the community – social and religious gatherings as well as education. A new church and mission house was built in Easterville – the new site for the Chemawawin community – along with a new graveyard. When the community was relocated, folks still travelled, when they could, to the Church at the Old Post for memorials and services for special occasions. As the church was on a high point, it can still be accessed on what is now an island in the midst of Cedar Lake. The Old Post church was decommissioned, but many still travel to the church to remember their ancestors and to place the funeral bulletins of their loved ones who have recently passed on the altar.

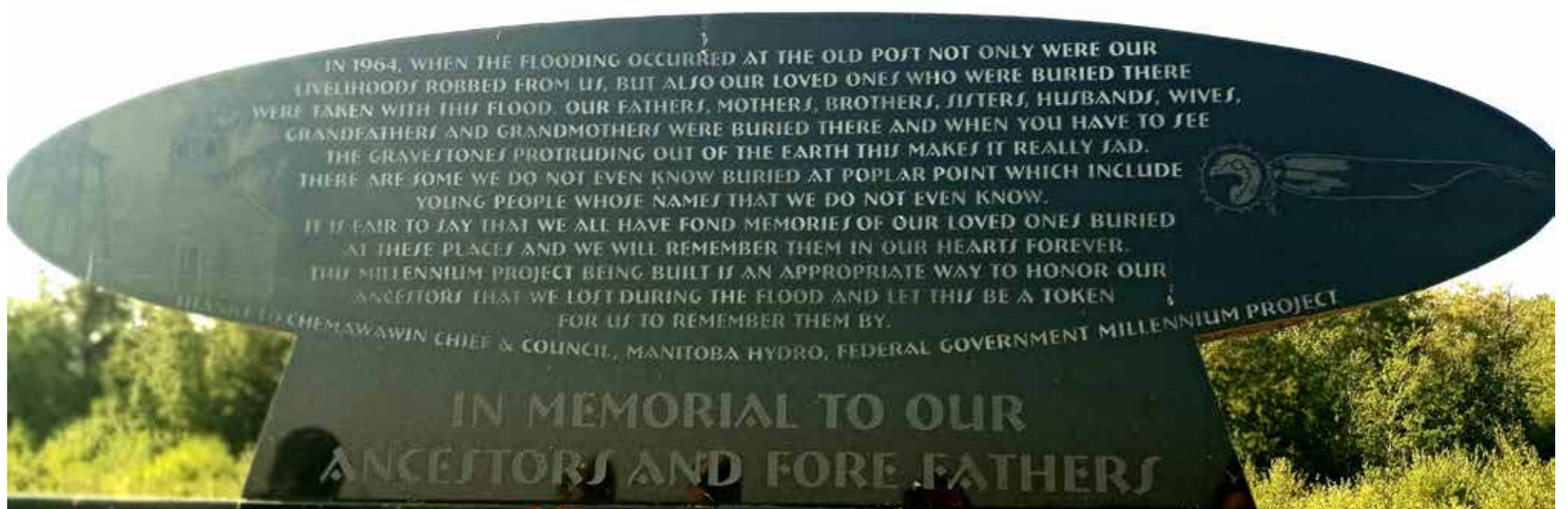
One of the many tragedies of the intentional flooding by Manitoba Hydro is that the community of the Chemawawin lost the burial place of their loved ones. To make matters even more painful, after the flood, many headstones, bones, and bodies surfaced along the newly expansive lake or washed up near the Grand Rapids dam. After losing their traditional home and way of life, the violation of the resting place of their ancestors was yet another heartbreak. The community members did what they could to treat the remains that were recovered with dignity and eventually, a memorial was erected telling the story in the words of the community members and listing the names and date of death of those whose burial place was destroyed by the flood.

There are still some inland places where you can find gravestones. We went to a clearing and saw 5 stone grave makers still standing – all children who had died. As in many communities, the final resting of many were marked with wooden crosses which have long since disintegrated. The official memorial

marker goes a long way to honour the burial place of so many and it was powerful to stand and read the hundreds of names etched on the memorial with their descendants. However, it still takes a 45 minute boat ride to get there, with a skilled driver who knows the lake (of over 500 square miles) and can avoid the deadheads – ever present reminders that this used to be land.

It was a moving experience to be there with some of the community members and descendants of the chief who had to provide leadership for his community during the move. Our host and guide, Billy Walker, knew the lake well. He worked for many years as a commercial fisherman and was also employed by Hydro every summer to clean up the debris that surfaced as a result of their intentional flooding. Taking a trip to the Old Post requires a skillful driver, and a confident guide – it's not a simple by any means! But the community members have adapted and still find ways to reconnect with their lands, much of which is now under water, save a few islands. Walker's daughter Maria told us that they grew up camping on various islands in the summer – her eldest sister joked that she was like Mowgli from "The Jungle Book" – completely at home in the bush from 2 years old! This is the way many Chemawawin member stay connected with Cheemoneek – their word for the lands in and under the waters.

It was amazing to see the lands and the history, the Old Post church, as well as the memorial. But equally beautiful was to witness the resilience and love that the Walker family had for the land AND the waters and their generosity in sharing their story and connections with us.



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