

Rachael Parker - Profile

How will you partner with us, advocate for us, and guide us?

With God's help ...

As the priest of a 3-point parish (2 small towns and a village) and as Archdeacon for Rural Ministry in the Diocese of Edmonton, I have come to love the threefold role of collaboration, prayer, and relationship building that is required when diverse peoples of varying backgrounds, cultures, and demographics come together. As the Church at its best, we are called to join in collaboration as we share gifts and skills, perspectives, and opinions. If we can begin with a mutual desire to collaborate each with one another, we begin well.

Prayer – as communities and individually – is a powerful tool to strengthen and focus collaboration. When people come together in prayer with an honest desire to know God's will and the intention to work together in God's will, then real relationships can be formed and strengthened. I believe that the heart of the Gospel is always about forming and regenerating relationships with Christ and with one another.

My vision for partnering with the people of the Diocese of Brandon is completely founded on the focus of intentional collaboration and relationship building in and through prayer. Relationship building through worship, fellowship, storytelling, and listening will establish the trust needed for true partnership, and when such trust is established, my ability to guide the Diocese, the Parishes, and the People will also be formed.

I also believe that advocacy, like partnerships and leadership, is best energized through the understanding and love that develops in honest relationship. When we deeply care for the ones for whom we are called to advocate, the work becomes urgent and the ability to do so becomes Spirit-driven. Whether advocating for young people in local communities, for Parishes within the secular environment, or for the Diocese within the greater Church, my love for the people and the work of our Diocese together, and the prayer support shared with me will lend courage to my words and strength to my conviction.

In short, my ability and desire to be the Diocese's advocate will grow from guidance I will share and the partnerships we will cultivate from the grassroots of mutual collaboration, prayer, and the relationships we develop with one another.

How will you work to empower & equip disciples of Jesus to live into their baptismal identity?

With God's help ...

Every member of the Diocese of Brandon – laity and clergy – is first before all else a child of God, a gift of Creator in this world, and called to serve in this Diocese. No calling, no sacrament of vocation, is greater than that of our call to be baptized members of the Kingdom of God. As such, we are not called to ask the question "what would Jesus do," but rather "what would Jesus *have us* do?" Our Baptismal Promises form the framework for our baptismal identity as Christians, as Congregations, as a Diocese. When we are focusing on those Promises and fulfilling our role as witnesses and supporters of others' promises, that is when we shine the Light of Christ brightly into the world.

If the Spirit so moves that I am invited to become the Chief Shepherd and pastor of this gift that is the Diocese of Brandon, it will be my role, my responsibility, and my privilege to take up the task of living the Baptismal Rule of Life publicly and through action and example to assist *all* my siblings in Christ to do the same. This will be lived out through deliberate and intentional conversation with the youngest of the young, the oldest of the elders, and all in between. In one-on-one conversations to parish and regional/community gatherings, to opportunities for whole Diocesan participation in whatever forms we discern are appropriate for each group, we will join together to collaborate, pray, and build those relationships Creator blesses us to share.

Some of the most transformative and faith-maturing ways in which all members of the Diocese can continue to become active ministers of the gospel can be found in our own communities. Through the active participation of *all* ages on Sunday and "other day" worship, in

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studies and outreach opportunities, and most definitely through gatherings in which food and story flow freely, we can continue to realize the age-old Biblical truth that where 2 or 3 are gathered Christ is in their midst. Our communities at worship, at work, and at play must be focussed on “we and us” doing God’s work and loving God’s people.

If our focus and practice are truly flowing hand in hand as collaboration through prayer and growing relationships, we will be greatly able to celebrate the good times. However, these same three ways of being will foster an atmosphere in which truth has room to be spoken and experienced even when – or especially when – our truth in the moment may lead us into conflict. We must work together to discover that conflict is not necessarily something to be avoided but rather can be a venue for learning, for possibilities of greater communication, and always for growth. While it is often natural to want to avoid conflict, we are not called to cower from that which we do not, or cannot, understand. It is in such times as these that we must turn again to our Baptismal Promises and recognize that the “other” with whom we stand in opposition is the very one we vowed to treat with dignity and respect. If times of conflict are approached as times to share and receive grace, then the Holy Spirit is given room to move and heal and bring about understanding and reconciliation.

That Spirit-led reconciliation is just as important when the quarrel, the anger, the long hurt, has happened to the Community from people and institutions that are not *part* of the Community. Our Church and individual parishes, the people who sit in our pews, and those who cannot bring themselves to our pews, as well as non-church communities, have been scarred by long hurts intended and unintended, for many generations. When this kind of abuse of power, religion, and ignorance is so deeply embedded in generations of families and communities, we cannot allow ourselves to believe that healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation will happen quickly. We must commit ourselves, and the generations who come after us, to sit and listen, to learn, to pray, and listen some more, and then to do the work of responding rather than reacting to those with whom we need to seek reconciliation.

As a leader in the Church, it is not my right to come into communities to tell them how to live onto a path of healing and reconciliation. It would be my responsibility to listen and learn, to pray with and for the very people Creator places along my journey – our journey as Church – to discover how we might faithfully and respectfully build relationships which, in Creator’s time, will become true partnerships.

How will you support and raise up leadership – lay and ordained – in the Diocese of Brandon?

With God’s help ...

In my time as a lay person and ordained, I have found my greatest supports have been during the times when those offering support shared a ministry of presence and of encouragement. As a young person, my memories of church centered around teachers and priests who would literally take off their shoes, get comfortable, ask me questions, and listen sincerely to my answers and my own questions. As a priest I have been blessed in many churches and many dioceses to have the company of priests and bishops of greater, or simply different, experience, mentor me, chastise me gently, encourage and challenge me. The common theme in all of these was their willingness to join me in relationship and prayer. My sense is that were I to be called to be a bishop, my episcopal style of support would begin, continue, and end with the desire to build real relationship with the people God placed in my care.

Practically speaking, time spent driving and the kilometres travelled serving the Diocese would not be all that unfamiliar to me. Over the past year since we created Dayspring Ministry and I was appointed Archdeacon for Rural Ministry, I have averaged over 2000 km/month. To be honest, the creation in which we live and the quiet time away from email offers glorious opportunities to be in extended conversation with God!

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As I have alluded to before, I find great joy in sharing in worship with people of all ages, experiences, and gifts. The Anglican tradition has provided us with both beautiful and powerful liturgies which connect us with generations past, and opportunities to explore and celebrate new ways God is calling us to interact, glorify, and co-create with Creator. We also have begun to recognize the power, the beauty, and possibility of collaborating and participating with other faithful people whose traditions speak new words into our hearts and souls, and which broadens our experiences and capacity to love Creator and all creation. Liturgies, old and new, handed down in books for centuries, and those shared from oral traditions are tremendous ways of discovering and discerning what we are all called to continue and what we are being called to do that may be new.

For me, a new way will be learning from and joining with – as I am called and accepted – the work of Sacred Circle, the Anglican Council of Indigenous People, Archbishop Chris, and the many Indigenous ministries within the Diocese. For personal and family reasons this has been a longing of my heart for most of my life but until my time in the Diocese of Edmonton, I had not had much opportunity to learn.

Over the past few years, I have had the generous gift of receiving 7 Cree Teachings, being present for a few Ceremonies, celebrating Eucharist in a Standing Stones liturgy, and take an Indigenous Studies course at the U of A, but I yearn to learn and experience more. This is one of the many ways that I acknowledge I have plenty of room to grow.

How will you help to address our resources challenges?

With God's help ...

While the profile names concerns regarding financial viability and the increasingly real possibilities that buildings may close, the hope that shines through the words is glorious. We are a resurrected people, which implies that death must first occur for Creator's greater intent to be fulfilled. Having taken the heart-breaking yet breathtakingly beautiful journey of closing one of my churches early in in my ministry, I can testify to the truth that when we place ourselves in God's hands and place our trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will lead us from the darkness of grief into the light of new life. If we are called to release some of the structures which hold history for us, then we will celebrate together what has been; we will grieve and shed tears together; and we will, together, turn in hope and anticipation to the new and resurrected life in Christ we will be given.

It will be so very important that we allow our hearts and minds to be open to new possibilities and questions like "why not?" Why not entertain ecumenical possibilities? Why not follow the early church model and gather for worship and fellowship in local establishments or homes of parishioners? Simply due to the day and age in which we live, we will always have the "dollars and cents" questions attached to our ministry, but we will also have God's sense of what we need to do and together we will do God's work.

Not having served in your Diocese, nor having learned how to be a bishop, I cannot predict or foresee how we might promote healthy stewardship within the Church, but I do work from the belief and the lived experience that, while we may never have too much, we will always have enough for the mission God places before us.

The Diocese of Brandon has a diversity of resources and demographics that allow the flexibility of not being pigeon-holed by the Church and the world around it. Like a beautiful and complex artwork, Brandon offers a cross-section of Canadian life which should invite the voice and perspective of Brandon folk to be heard within the Provincial and National contexts. This is work that should be encouraged not only through episcopal presence but also through the Councils of the Church, educational opportunities for lay and ordained alike, and through opportunities to share welcome and hospitality to those who don't yet know the beauty and heart of the Diocese of Brandon.

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This Diocese will work toward building resources, but we will also work toward becoming a resource in the provincial and national Church.

How can we support you in deepening your gifts and walk with Jesus?

You will ... with God's help!

Pray for me: in absolute seriousness, keep me and the work of the Diocese and Diocesan Staff in your daily prayers.

Meet with me: when I come to your Parish or Region, to Henry Budd College or the Anglican Memorial Camp and youth gatherings, please make the time to join me and teach me about you and your Parish and your Community.

Be patient with me as I learn how to be a bishop and as I learn how to re-orient myself when I get lost – literally and metaphorically – because I promise I will! I also promise that great stories will grow from those times of “lost-ness!”

Remind me to take time for silence and retreat: I love what I do, and I sometimes forget to stop or at least slow down. I will need you to teach me the ways of listening in a vast land; of seeing with new eyes the glory of Creator's handiwork; appreciating the rhythms of nature begun at the beginning of time and carrying through into eternity.

Walk with me as I continue to pray always, and I continue to learn and grow daily with Jesus as my constant companion and guide.

Allow me the privilege of learning from you. The older I get the more I am aware that wisdom comes not from just doing but also from listening to and learning from those who walk the path ahead of me. This Diocese has the great resources of elders who have lived a different way and whose teachings can build a strong foundation for my ministry to come. I need their council that I may continue to learn the ways of Creator and those truths that can only be learned and experienced in community.

Play with me and learn with me through laughter and seeing the future through the eyes of our Youth. Early in my ministry, I had the great privilege and joy to help bring “Ask & Imagine” into fruition. For 4 years I was blessed to work with young people from across Canada as we discovered together faith and leadership. The very idea that I could share my joy in Jesus Christ and my love of sharing the Good News and serving others with the young people and children of all parts of this Diocese simply makes my heart sing!

In conclusion, thank you for taking the time to read and consider these questions and answers. I truly hope that I will be called by the Holy Spirit to serve you and to serve with you. Your Diocese is a beautiful and hope-filled place, which is doing God's work, being the hands and feet of Christ, and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you.

During the Search Process and the Episcopal Election, please know that my prayers are with each of you in the Diocese, in the desire that the Holy Spirit will guide you to choose the right person who will be your Bishop and who will love you. Whoever may be chosen, may God's will be done.

Blessings,

Rachael Parker +