

LENT 2022

# HEAVEN IN ORDINARY



*Saint George's Anglican Church  
Edmonton, Alberta*

## The Gentleness of God

By Rev. Maddie Urion

Most of us have not had the opportunity to think or explore at length about the gentleness of God. It isn't a part of God's character that gets a lot of air time! And yet, the New Testament and Psalms contain generous references to God's gentleness. Indeed, Paul's letters contain multiple descriptions of gentleness as being a primary aspect of who God is and how God relates to us through Jesus. God's gentleness is not a passiveness or a hanging about in the background of things. It is not a backward movement in the face of danger or of a sidestepping to avoid conflict. There is nothing small or Rather, the gentleness of God is another way of understanding the profound strength of God's heart for the world. God's gentleness exists as God's intentional leaning forward into uncertainty, of pain, of chaos that life can bring, and holding us in God's own embrace all the while -- not rescuing us or denying what we can experience in life, but being with us in it. God does not leap onto the scene brandishing weapons and giving a fierce demonstration of strength, but leans into uncertainty and death and says "alleluia", redeeming it all. God's gentleness is God's strength, and God wants us to allow him to wrap us up in it and partner with him in all of our triumphs and sorrows.

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## Getting to Know Rev. Madeleine Urion

Can you tell us about your calling into pastoral ministry?

Oddly, it didn't come from church in the conventional sense. My calling is actually a long history of being quiet on the land because I had nothing else to do as a kid. In hindsight I recognize God's presence with me in contemplation on the long days I spent outside on the farm where I spent my early childhood, simply wandering around in imaginative play, reading, and thinking about life. My calling also came from recognizing God in words I was introduced to as a student of English Literature.



As a young adult, I found myself weighing the cost of pursuing passions and a sense of vocation while being sharply aware of practicalities and finding a reasonable profession that I could commit to and stick with. It took me years to admit my sense of vocation. I thought my soft voice would render a vocation in the church as a priest a non-issue, and seriously contemplated the Sisterhood in some form.

During my BA in English Literature I fell deeply, wholly in love with the poetry of John Donne, George Herbert, and the writings of the Christian mystics. I tried to find a place in academic life, but I quickly realized that I lacked the competitive spirit necessary to build an academic career in literature in the 1990's. I actually made a pilgrimage to the church where Julian of Norwich lived after a conference that the U of A sent me to in 1998, and I prayed for God's direction. I think that I offered the simplicity of who I am, and asked God to consecrate me to something that would both please God, and help me to live out the experience of God's delight. That, combined with 2.5 subsequent years of a Bachelor of Science nursing degree, revealed to me that it was the Spirit in the works of these poets and writers that I had fallen in love with and whose power and grace I wanted to live out in all of who I am, and that it was the presence of the Spirit that I experienced in the hospital at the bedside, and that I always wanted to seek this presence of God's Spirit in the hearts and lives of the people around me.

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What was really funny was that the day I went to speak with Bishop Victoria about ordination in 2001, there was a huge, huge blizzard. I was almost shaking I was so nervous. I wore some very funky fashion boots popular in the '90's -- almost like combat platform boots -- and red lipstick. I wanted to appear unconventional. Not a great choice when you have to travel by bus in a blizzard. I waited for the bus, slowly freezing more and more! I cut my own hair at the time in kind of a scruffy short style (not advised) and there was a lot of product in it. The snow kept piling on top of my head, on top of all of that frozen product, without melting. I felt like an idiot and began to wonder if I should even go, as clearly I was too insecure to present my real self to Bishop Victoria. Low and behold one of the most popular guys in my high school, who had barely spoken to me at school in the decade since graduation, pulled up in a warm BMW, rolled down the window, yelled hello and asked where he could drive me. I didn't even know he knew who I was. So not only did I arrive at the Diocesan offices dry, with my hair intact and without looking like Robert Smith from The Cure, I arrived in style! He's never shown up again when I've needed a ride, sadly. That whole experience revealed to me that God will not only use my simplicity, God will use everything we offer AND God will also deeply delight in how God goes about doing that. I was a priest in Toronto for about two years before coming home to Edmonton, and our first son, Sam, was born within a year. People fascinate me. I've also had my own house cleaning side hustle in recent years while part time at a parish, led a support group for moms with postpartum depression, worked as an in home personal care aide to an infirm elderly man, and even did a stint in a window factory on the north side doing inventory. All of these things have hugely informed my pastoral sensibilities. How can you minister to people unless you are with them, unless you understand what lives are about, and you have the same struggles and triumphs? Church is the center of where I live out that calling to incarnate God's love and presence,

### **What is some of the best spiritual advice you have received?**

What a great question. There's honestly so many things that people have told me over the years that have been helpful, and oftentimes it's paradoxical, like "it's not about you" but also "what is God saying to you in this"? Some advice that has remained constant throughout my life is the words: "don't be afraid". At times, that has been "Don't be afraid of questioning". Or, "don't be afraid of the future". That, and that telling the truth is always best, no matter how painful it might be. And to show up for my own life. And our very own Kath Sparo once said to me "follow the deeper thread", That can mean different things to me at different times, but on the whole, I've experienced it to mean the value in always examining what might be under the surface of things and of people.

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## What is your favorite Christian celebration and why?

It is both the eucharist and baptism. I think that it is because we get to use ordinary things to express extraordinary truths. When you listen to the words of the prayers around these services, our whole collective story going right back to the beginning is told and retold. It's extraordinary to think that what we do now in church is a ripple outward in time of the day the Spirit moved upon the waters, and of the day that Jesus gave up his life and willfully gave his whole self away: flesh, spirit, everything. The moment where the words of institution are said always makes me pause. I also particularly love Advent, especially the focus on a pregnant, physically awkward, courageous Mary running all over Galilee, and how this reminds us that our lives in the Spirit have as much to do with bodies and blood and biology and making our way as people of peace in a violent world as they do spiritual transformation.

## What does communion with Christ mean to you?

How long do we have for this? Where do I start? In short, it means I do not need to be afraid. And that there is a Love beyond me yet within me, that reaches deeply into me and flows from me at the same time. Communion with Christ means that I have a place in this world; that my life and personhood isn't for naught, but that despite my vulnerabilities and fragilities and how these cause me to be imperfect, that God looks at me and declares unequivocally and definitively "You are my precious child, and I delight in you. What I have made is good". Most of my journey of faith is figuring out how to live that out.

## Who or what inspires you and why?

So many people inspire me. Right now, the theologians Lisa Sharon Harper, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Christina Cleveland, and the artist Scott Erickson are challenging and teaching me. Nadia Bolz Weber. Laura Jean Truman. Hanz Urs Von Balthazar. The poet Jay Hulme. People who are finding their voice creatively and truthfully and authentically. The people of St. George's inspire me - so many people showed up for countless zoom gatherings and community events to engage hard topics, to pray, and to be together as Christian community. It's the most beautiful thing in the world to hear someone talk about their faith, or to get to know people and find connections, etc. I actually can't imagine many more wonderful things than hearing someone speak about their faith.

MARCH 20TH 2022

# REV. MADDIE URION'S INDUCTION SERVICE



The Rev. Madeleine Urion was appointed to be the rector of St. George's in 2020. Nearly two years of pandemic restrictions challenged our ability to mark her appointment with the recognition and ceremony it would normally receive. On March 20, 2022, we were finally able to. As we prepared for the service, Rev. Maddie asked that it be at least as much a celebration of the community of St. George's as a recognition of her leadership among us. After two years of navigating the waters of Zoom and physical separation, a celebration was definitely in order! Many beautiful things have taken place here during the pandemic. Friendships have been deepened. We have learned much about each other. We have been challenged to support each other through fear, frustration, loneliness, and loss. We have experienced God's love in new and deeper ways. In all of that, Rev. Maddie has been at the helm, leading, guiding, and listening, with gentleness, compassion, hope, and a deep and infectious faith.



The service was opened by Cree Elder, Russell Auger, who led a smudge, and then blessed Rev. Maddie with a sung prayer in Cree. Later in the service, the community presented a number of gifts to Rev. Maddie: Bibles, water, oil, the diocesan canons, the keys to the church, prayer books, and bread and wine. With them, we explored the rich and beautiful diversity that exists within this community, a diversity that we hope to continue to explore, to learn from, and to be enriched and transformed by. Bishop Steve, who led the service, allowed us to go “off script” here, and as part of the presentation, each gift came with a story offered by its presenters. Each story was a gift of its own. With each one, we learned a little bit more about who we are, and, perhaps, a little bit about how the Holy Spirit is moving in this place and calling us forward.





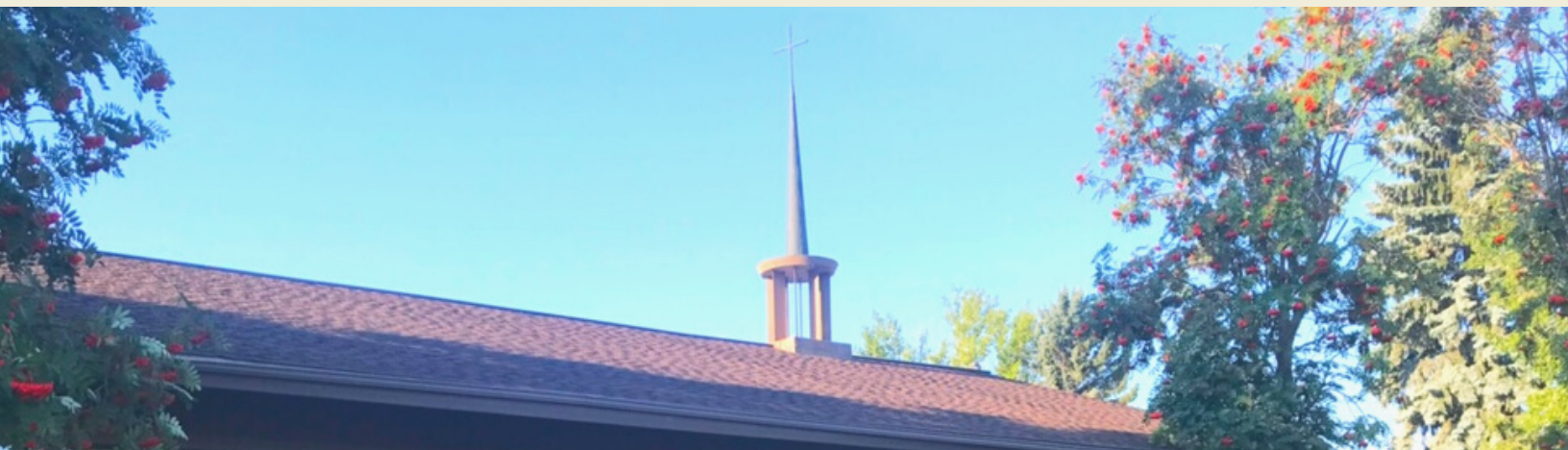
From beginning to end, with beautiful and soul-lifting music offered throughout by Nola, Aaron and Shawn, with amazing and spontaneous teamwork moving people, chairs and microphones into place at exactly the right time, the service was a beautiful expression of who we are, and whose we are, and a fitting celebration of Rev. Maddie's ministry among us. As Bishop Steve said later, it was a holy time. It truly was. May we walk forward together in the light of that holiness.

By Lynne Reckhow



# PARISH ID UPDATE

By Rev. Maddie Urion



In 2021, a group of about a dozen people who call St. George's their church home embarked on a process called Parish ID with our Archdeacon for Mission, the Ven. Richard King. The concept of Parish ID is that it is less a program but a series of conversations about church history, how our approaches and understanding of church are shaped by this history, and what this means for our present day and future life of the church. The historical bit is then followed up by an examination of the life of Jesus and his call to the disciples, especially as portrayed in the gospel of Luke. The next part of the process was an exploration of the dimensions of Jesus' ministry around what's called the five fold functions of ministry: apostolic, evangelistic, prophetic, teaching, and shepherding. The final bit focussed on how these five fold functions exist among us at St. George's, and how we are gifted in each of these areas, and what that might mean for how we dialogue, live, and serve as a community gathered around Jesus. Sometimes these conversations left us wanting to pull our hair out and sometimes they left us deeply self aware.

We learned that we are strongly:

- People who find meaning in taking care of others (shepherding)
- People who believe strongly in recognizing the needs of others and meeting them where they are at. We want to bridge the space between the church and the world (evangelistic).
- We want to make sure that what we do is aligned with God's will for us (prophetic).

The Parish ID process also helped us articulate areas of giftedness, skills, and passion for service and engagement at St. George's. The ID conversation, alongside many other conversations that organically formed through educational events, worship, and community dialogue, suggested that there are broad areas of interest and energy at St. George's around creativity, spirituality, and justice.

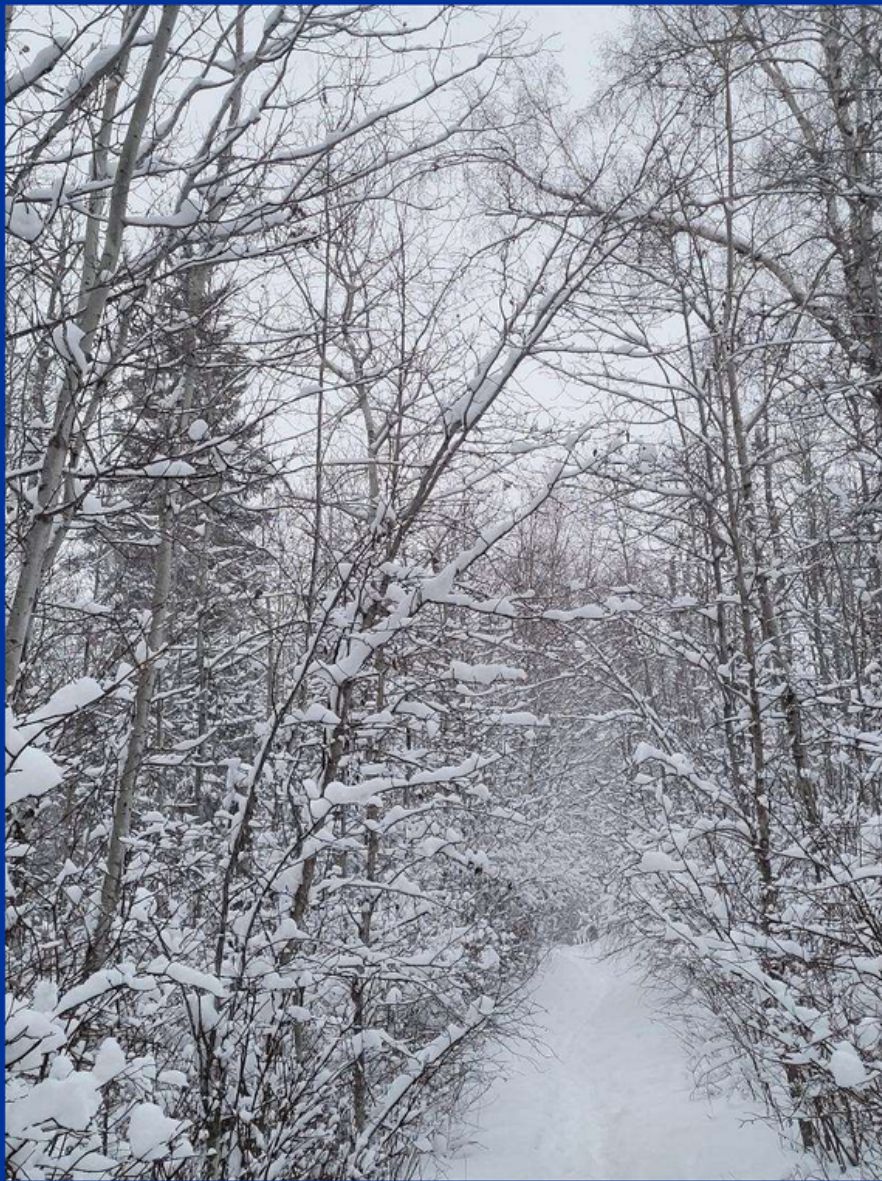




We wrapped up our Conversations in November of 2021. It was clear that we were on the cusp of "what's next", and that we needed to transition to something that would give us the means to discern specific movements of the Spirit among us. The questions became: how do we organize ourselves? How do we invite people alongside and enable the broadest possible participation within our community? How do we dialogue most fruitfully together about serving the hospitals and the university? How do we best use our gifts and resources to be the church in this time and in this place?

Our ministry teams are the outcome of this transition. 2022 saw the birth of the Creativity and Spirituality Team, and the Social Justice and Outreach Team. The St. Aiden's Revitalization Team that was formed at our AGM in 2020 and paused during the pandemic is reconvening at this time. Vestry has determined that stewardship must be an ongoing conversation, and to that end we have created a very small Financial Ministry Team to help support Vestry in thinking of creative and sustainable ways to care for this specific area of stewardship.

*Are you interested in these conversations happening around creativity, spirituality, and social justice? You are most welcome to join in the dialogue! Please email the church or Rev. Maddie with any questions you have about participating.*



Lord, thank you for cathedrals made not with human hands.

For worship  
that looks like nothing more  
than palms up...

For hope  
that is sometimes as fine as a thread  
that we cling to  
half expecting it to break  
half expecting it to fade away into nothingness.

For delicate beauty  
reminding us  
that whether we can feel it or not  
peace remains  
to be found.  
It is there in the palm of your hand  
in the breath of your Spirit  
in the eyes  
and the touch  
of your Son.

Not ONLY for us. But also for us.

We lay before you our past  
our present  
and our future.  
All that we have done.  
All that we are.  
All that lies within us.  
All we have yet to do.  
All we have yet to become.

Palms up.

Amen.

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## Introducing Judith Kuegler, Administrative Assistant to the St. George Parish

Judith comes to us from North Carolina where she has worked as an artist and art teacher with special interest in global women's issues, multiculturalism and anthropology.

She currently resides with her husband, Alistair, in the St. George priory. Together they are battling Alistair's stage 4 colon cancer with ongoing treatments. She continues to support Alistair with an immense level of care, and finds solace in creating her own artwork in multiple mediums and managing her Etsy site.

Her role as administrative assistant includes social media updates, website management and art project coordinator.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

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**Spring Concert:** Our Spring Concert this year will feature the resonant tones of Aaron Parker, and will also include a special guest or two! Saturday June 4th at 7pm. Tickets are available at the door for \$25 for in person attendance. Tickets are \$20 (plus fees) for online attendance and can be purchased here: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/spring-concert-featuring-aaron-parker-and-guests-tickets-338644273137> . 7

If you do not want to use eventbrite, please email the church at [Stgeorges@telus.net](mailto:Stgeorges@telus.net) or by calling the church at 780-439-1470.

**Social Justice and Outreach Group:** meets on Zoom at 7pm on Tuesday May 17th to talk about short term goals. Please come if you are interested in learning more and being involved in social justice initiatives! Contact [revmaddie@gmail.com](mailto:revmaddie@gmail.com) for the link.

Vestry: meets on Thursday May 19th at 7:30pm.

**Psalm Writing Day:** Have you ever wanted to write your lament or your praise to God? Do you need a creative outlet to express what you have on your heart? This is exactly what the psalms are for and why they exist. Please save the date for Saturday June 24th, from 10am-12. We'll be gathering to learn about the historical context of the psalms, and to try our hand at writing psalms ourselves.

JUNE 4TH 2022

# SPRING CONCERT AT ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH



AARON PARKER WITH SPECIAL  
GUEST GISELE PARKER

TICKETS: \$25

SATURDAY JUNE 4TH AT 7PM

AT ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH  
11733 87 AVE NW, EDMONTON, AB T6G  
0Y4

[CLICK HERE TO  
PURCHASE TICKETS](#)

Aaron's sound is rich and wonderful and inviting, and will settle you into a peaceful, contemplative place of quiet gratitude uplifting for our hearts and spirits. Aaron will perform a variety of 60's and 70's folk inspired original songs, as well as some covers of well loved songs from the past several decades.

