

Rural Routes Through the Holy: Thrive Where You Are

In just over an hour we'd gathered it up. The tables and mics, the gorgeous hanging quilt, the portable labyrinths and the prayer stations, the resources, and the notes. But really, we're still gathering it up – the fragments of that abundance, just like in the story¹. We're still gathering all that was generated in our time together and the fragments will nourish us for days, weeks, even years to come.



We met at Camp Ta Wa Si, Johnston's Point, NB from June, 16 – 18, 2022.

There was such warm energy in our days together, lots of buzz and conversation, lots of questions set free. [Dr. Marvin Lee Anderson](#) led us through several presentations that encouraged us to value our stories, to honour and express our emotions, to lament and en-joy (Julian of Norwich), to listen deeply, to take seriously our own yearning for encounter with God, our own giftedness as people, as rural people, for ministry. The questions we discussed in the [Rural Café](#) table groups came from the midst of us. We discussed them with great animation. Marvin's rich words and playful presence freed our imaginations and oh how we loved those café discussions. Our own wisdom on being rural people and rural church rose up through our small group conversations and we nourished one another.

We fed on Tasters too, brief presentations of less than an hour each given by a variety of people on a variety of things so good that now that we're home, we may want to cook them up in our own communities. Spiritual Memoir, [Table Church](#), Coffee in the Church Woods, Food Forests at Port Elgin Regional School, the Spiritual Practice of Working with Wood, Healing Pathway, Quilts of Valour, Feed My Sheep, Music in Seniors' Residences, each of the offerings, each given by someone who loves it well.

Through a [Ritual of Lament](#), of emptying out in order to receive, we wrung out what we were heavy with to allow the buoyancy of our lives to return.

We began and ended our time together with worship, opening the Scripture through Godly Play, exploring the questions of the times we feel "in between" and what the gifts of those times might be. In the mornings, Kerry led us in body prayer to Peter Mayer's song, *Breathe in, Breathe Out*, making our bodies as supple and receptive as our minds and hearts to receive the gifts of these days. We had great food catered by the folks of Baie Verte, Port Elgin, Tidnish Bridge Pastoral Charge. Imagine Strawberry Shortcake and Rhubarb Crisp in the same day! In the evening we enjoyed the musical gifts of Keila Glydon and Jolee Patkai from PEI and also [The Carter Girls](#): Marlise and Maisie from NB.

Next year we'll gather again from June 15 – 17th, this time at Camp Abby, PEI.

¹ Luke 9:10-17

In the meantime, the fragments from this nourishing and humble banquet will sustain us. Some of the fragments are generative questions.

What does collaboration look like?

How do we deal with grief as we move through change?

What do we long for and how do we listen deeply?

What holds us captive?

How are appetites for the Holy whetted?

How are we living as the body of Christ?

We are also left with morsels of assurance.

Our stories have goodness and wisdom and strength.

The church needs our stories and our rural experience.

We need to honour our gifts for ministry; each of us has them.

We need to look, not for ministers who deliver ministry to us but ministers who encourage the development of ministry within us.

We need to acknowledge and honour our grief and also our joy.

We are people of imagination and creativity who can find ways most holy and sustainable for who we are, rural community.

Here together we fed on the richness of one another's stories and were strengthened to go out in Love, carrying the fragments.