

## Hello Augustine.

Last Sunday, we did things a little bit differently. There was no sermon per se. Instead, Linda-Ann Sturgeon and Rev. Eric collaborated on planning the service – particularly how Communion was staged and offered. You have here copies of their shared reflections about what they experienced in working together. Each read the other person’s reflection and then Communion was served.

We trust that this speaks volumes about the kind of collaboration needed in the church today – given that life has brought so many changes that can cause people to feel very isolated from each other.

### **Linda-Ann Sturgeon’s reflection about collaborating to plan the Communion Liturgy.**

When Rev. Eric shared his idea to collaborate on the communion liturgy and talked about reversing roles, my first, somewhat panicked response was an adamant “I am NOT preaching the sermon.”

But seriously, I truly felt honoured that he asked me to work jointly on this project. The experience of sharing ideas at a Starbucks table was, for me, a living embodiment of the core principles of collaboration. I am an introvert who would rather write a 25-page formal essay than do a talk and being shy means that I usually need to take extra time to reflect before I speak. I would imagine that being on the receiving end of that hesitancy might feel a little jarring, especially when ideas are flowing freely and spontaneously on the other side of the table.

In a room full of extroverts, it is easy for me to feel invisible and unheard. Although Rev. Eric and I have very different personalities and styles of communication, I sense that we share a mutual respect for our differences, making it possible to work together harmoniously toward a common goal. Compassion and empathy, combined with active listening, trust, and humility, meant that I felt heard, valued, and respected as we shared thoughts and ideas.

I also felt safe enough to share from a place of vulnerability, since we also had some time for a pastoral care visit to debrief the experience of losing a 12-year-old student to suicide just before the new school year starts next week.

It is deeply meaningful to me that Augustine affirms an inclusive and open Communion table, where all are welcome. There is unity in diversity, and collaboration encourages us to recognize and to celebrate our differences while working together toward common goals.

September 3, 2023

**Rev. Eric's reflection about collaborating to plan the Communion Liturgy.**

The idea to collaborate with Linda-Ann on this communion liturgy came to me in a flash – at the back of my neck. My time the School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality of St-Paul's University taught me that when I feel that flash at the back of my neck, it is the Holy Spirit leading me into the gray areas of my life. It's time to trust my intuition. And in those areas, our gray areas of intuition, we are always called to walk together.

The gray areas are a blend of our light, the light of others and the eternal light of Jesus and Love of God.

So, what has this experience of collaboration been like for me – not as your pastor – but as a new Winnipegger and Augustinian?

Well, many things of course. Too many to name here. So, I will name it here in one sentence, knowing that one sentence is the nexus point of an experience of the Holy Spirit that is as deep as it is wide. Here we go:

In that moment sitting with Linda-Ann at Starbucks, planning this service, there came to me a message that with everything that Caroline and I have undertaken since last summer to make it possible to move here, God said that not only that I didn't need to do this alone; God said that I shouldn't do it alone.

My friends – my brothers and sisters and siblings – I give thanks for this Communion Table – where we hold the Love of God in common.

Thanks be to God. Amen.