

Order of Rupert's Land Nominee – Joan Spencer, Parish of St. Mark, Winnipeg

Joan Spencer has been a member of St. Mark's Anglican Church in Winnipeg since shortly after her arrival in Canada post World War II. She always has been extremely active in the Church and has exercised her gifts through service as a lay minister. Joan was a member of a team of licensed lay leaders in the Parish who regularly led Morning Prayer services including preaching. She has cared for the sick and was "on call" for one of the local funeral homes to lead funerals and grave-side services. For nearly ten years Joan has called Dakota House – an assisted living residence – her home.

It is not for the above that we are recommending Joan Spencer for the Order of Rupert's Land, though the information clearly presents a person who has taken seriously, and is exercising, her Baptismal ministry in the Church and the world. It is, however, the ministry which she imagined and has led at Dakota House for which we are nominating her.

Since moving to Dakota House Joan envisioned and enacted a regular monthly worship service there. Joan discovered that many Anglicans resided at Dakota House. Without a resident Chaplain, these persons, and those of other denominations, were not receiving the benefit of participation in regular worship within the context of their new community. Joan has drawn this community together where they are pastored, encouraged, and can worship with familiarity and as a community. Joan customarily would lead a Service of the Word, from the Eucharist, until a Priest from St. Mark would arrive (after St. Mark's Church service) and the service would continue with the Eucharist.

Joan has discovered at Dakota House Anglicans from across the Diocese (and others) who desire to worship; and she has exercised the gift of invitation and drawn out and mentored persons to serve as verger, sides persons, readers, intercessors and ministrants from among such parishes as the Cathedral, St. Luke's, St. Bartholomew's, and St. Peter's, as well as St. Mark's. The average attendance is generally 20 or more.

These people care for one another; they are remembered in prayer by name when ill or when they die; they meet together for support and share a meal together after church. At a recent suggestion, an offering is now taken up. Offerings are recorded at St. Mark's. People are giving generously in response to their blessings. In all ways, they have become a faithful Eucharistic community.

We believe this faithful lay-led ministry of service and evangelism in a retirement residence is iconic of what can be for those who have entered a new season in their lives or who are no longer able to be part of their former spiritual homes. They worship with joy and involvement. They look beyond themselves and exercise the gift of invitation and comfort to others. And... it is happening not because of the vision of the broader church looking after the needs of these seniors, but through the faithful lay visionary and mentor, Joan Spencer.

We, The Rev. Linda Parsons, and Dr. Lynn Webster, are pleased to nominate Joan Spencer for the Order of Rupert's Land.

For the past year plus, at Joan's invitation, the Rev. Linda Parsons, came monthly to lead the entire worship service – Joan, being in her early 90's, simply felt she was not up to leading the service in the manner in which she felt it ought to be led. She and the residents of Dakota House continue to have a monthly Eucharist thanks to the vision and action of a faithful disciple of Christ – Joan Spencer.