

Be a Waver: A Canada Day Reflection



Dear friends in Christ,

Tomorrow, Canadians from coast to coast to coast will gather to celebrate our country. We will raise flags, gather around picnic tables, watch fireworks, and spend time with family and friends.

As I prepare to celebrate Canada Day, I have found myself thinking about one unexpected lesson from our recent journey through Western Canada. It wasn't the mountains or the glaciers that have stayed with me most. It was the people standing beside the railway tracks, waving.

As our train travelled through the interior of British Columbia, something remarkable happened. Every time we approached a crossing or a small community, people came out to wave. Families gathered beside the tracks. Children smiled and waved enthusiastically. Others stood on balconies or front porches. Some simply paused whatever they were doing to greet a train full of strangers passing through their community.

Our hosts told us this happens every day. They even pointed out a couple named Brian and Doris, who have stood on their deck each morning for the past ten years to wave as the Rocky Mountaineer passes by.

Our hosts shared what happened next. The train staff eventually noticed that these familiar faces were there day after day, year after year. One day they tossed a note from the train asking for Brian and Doris's email address. Before long, the Rocky Mountaineer invited them to experience the journey for themselves.

And when their train passed through their own community, something beautiful happened. The Rocky Mountaineer staff stood waiting along the platform, waving back to Brian and Doris as the train rolled by.

It was such a simple gesture of gratitude and kindness. Yet it struck me as something profoundly Canadian—a reminder of the generosity, hospitality, and neighbourliness that have long shaped the character of our country.

Earlier in our journey, we also passed the historic site at Craigellachie, where the Last Spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven in 1885. As I reflected on its inscription afterward, one phrase stayed with me. It described the railway as the moment when "a nebulous dream became a reality"—a ribbon connecting Canada from sea to sea.

Canada is a vast country. Our communities differ in geography, culture, and history. Yet if we look for them, there are reminders all around that what binds us together is often found in the simplest expressions of kindness—a wave, a smile, a welcome extended to someone we may never meet again.

As Christians, those same qualities lie at the heart of our faith. Jesus welcomed the stranger, blessed the neighbour, and taught us that even the smallest acts of kindness reveal something of God's kingdom.

As churches across the Diocese of Algoma welcome summer visitors in the weeks ahead, we have an opportunity to be "wavers." We can open our doors with genuine hospitality. We can welcome those who join us for worship, whether for one Sunday or for a lifetime. We can encourage one another and give thanks for the countless quiet acts of service that sustain the life of our parishes—through pastoral care, music, teaching, outreach, hospitality, prayer, and faithful service.

Much of this ministry happens quietly and without recognition. Yet every act of faithfulness contributes to the ministry of Christ in our communities.

On this Canada Day, I give thanks not only for the beauty of our country, but for the generosity of its people. May God continue to bless Canada and may we each find simple ways to reflect Christ's welcome—offering kindness, encouragement, and hospitality wherever we are.

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