

What place is mine?

By [Ryan Dueck](#)

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Times of transition are tough. We currently find ourselves up to our ears in boxes and clutter and mess as we prepare to pack up and head back across the Rockies next week to begin a new chapter in our lives as family. We have done this moving thing a number of times now, but it never gets easier. It is simultaneously celebratory, reflective, disorienting, emotionally exhausting, and painful. This Sunday will be my last one in Nanaimo, and “last ones” aren’t easy. What do you say at times like these, to people who have played such an important and formative role in your story? How do you encapsulate three years into a single sermon? How do you come up with something coherent and meaningful to say in the midst of all this mental/emotional/physical dislocation?

I’ve been spending some time in Kathleen Norris’s [*Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*](#) over the last little while, which has given me much to think about as we prepare to return to our roots. Norris returned to her grandmother’s house in a small town in South Dakota after years spent in more appealing locales such as Hawaii and Manhattan. We are about to embark upon a similar, if less extreme, journey—Vancouver Island is probably less exotic than Hawaii, southern Alberta, not as remote as South Dakota. In both cases, though, it is coming home, with all that this entails.

In one chapter, Norris remarks that “when modern Americans ask ‘what is sacred?’ they are really asking ‘what place is mine?’” As we walk through a week of difficult goodbyes here on Vancouver Island and look ahead to the next phase of our lives in southern Alberta, as we reflect upon how these years away from the places of our birth have shaped us as human beings and followers of

Jesus, and as we anticipate what it will be like to re-enter a familiar community, the answer to the question “what place is mine?” seems obvious.

Both.

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