



RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

March 2024

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Existing for the sake of our neighbours



Bible on a lectern at St Columba, Port Hardy.

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

William Temple, theologian and Archbishop of Canterbury, was fond of reminding us that the church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it. Or, as he also sometimes put it, the church is “the only organization that exists solely for the benefit of non-members.”

I was reminded of these words on the second Sunday in Lent, when the gospel reading had Jesus telling us that “those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mark 8:35)

It’s important that we always keep this in mind. It is tempting, as church leaders and members, to become preoccupied with saving the church, when in fact, what we are called to do is love and serve the world.

Churches that are focused on survival and self-preservation struggle, whereas churches that are outwardly focused on the needs of their neighbours and on serving the community, tend to thrive.

There are a lot of good news stories in our diocese of parishes that are outwardly focused and are serving the needs of their communities. In the South Island, St Andrew, Sidney is preparing to serve its [100,000th bowl of soup](#). In the North Island, St Columba, Port Hardy continues to operate the sunrise sanctuary, which offers warmth and comfort to unhoused and chaotically housed folk in Port Hardy who just need to get warm and be safe. I am proud to serve in such a diocese.

At the end of this month, we will celebrate Easter. The tomb will be empty, Christ will not be there. He will already have gone on ahead of them into Galilee.

May we, as Christians, never be tempted to sit at the empty tomb, but always and everywhere be following the risen Christ out into the world. Christ spent no time berating the disciples for abandoning him, nor did he do the “woulda, coulda, shoulda,” suggesting that it all could have gone better, that he could have been more “successful.” No, Christ simply rose up and went on ahead of the disciples, calling them to follow him and to tend the sheep, feed the lambs and be his body in the world. May we go and do likewise, trusting in Jesus’ words: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.”

Clara Plamondon installed as the second bishop of the Territory



Pictured are (left to right) Kathy Martin, Lutheran bishop of the BC Synod; John Stephens, bishop of New Westminster; Lynne McNaughton, bishop of Kootenay and metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of BC and Yukon; Clara Plamondon, bishop of the Territory of the People; Lesley Wheeler-Dame, bishop of Yukon; and David Lehmann, bishop of Caledonia. Photo by Philomena Hughes.

By Naomi Racz

On January 25, Clara Plamondon became the second bishop of the Territory of the People.

Clara hails from northern Alberta. After several years working in municipal government, she obtained an MDiv in theology from the Vancouver School of Theology in 2013. Clara also received mentoring for two years at St John the Baptist, Duncan from the

former primate Andrew Hutchison. In 2013, she was ordained as a deacon in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets, and as a priest the following year. Clara served as the incumbent at St John the Baptist, Duncan from 2013 to 2018, when she took up the post of incumbent at St Paul, Nanaimo. She was also appointed archdeacon for the Cowichan/Mid-Vancouver Island region in 2018.

In September 2023, Clara was elected bishop of the Territory of the People. Clara was the only candidate standing in the election and she was elected on the first ballot, with the provincial House of Bishops unanimously accepting the result. [Speaking to the Anglican Journal](#) last year, Clara said that there were two reasons she wanted to be a bishop. “One was a sense of call recognizing gifts and abilities that I have to offer, which aligned with the opportunity that presented itself in the Territory of the People. And I saw the possibility of ministry and service with the people there.”

Clara’s ordination took place at St Paul’s Cathedral, Kamloops, and was presided by Lynne McNaughton, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of British Columbia and Yukon. The preacher was Dawna Wall, formerly the incumbent at St Michael and All Angels, Victoria, and now the director of Bethany House of Prayer in Arlington, Massachusetts. Also in attendance were Archbishop Linda Nicholls and National Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper.

Before the procession, Pastoral Elder Pauline spoke about the four pauses in life: as a baby, a youth, an adult, and an elder. She explained that the procession would include four pauses, which would provide an opportunity to “give thanks for how far we’ve come... appreciate what we have... pay tribute and

acknowledge where we've come from... and acknowledge where we are going." Pastoral Elder Pauline and Pastoral Elder Ernie then led the procession with singing and drumming.

January 25 also marks the feast day of Saint Paul's conversion and the eightieth anniversary of the ordination of Florence Li Tim-Oi, the first woman to be ordained in the Anglican Communion.

During her homily, Dawna Wall spoke to this confluence of events and their central figures: Saint Paul, Florence and Clara. She spoke of how all three had dwelled in "a territory of uncertainty." Clara, she said, had been called to serve at a time of great uncertainty for the church, and that she had, in her life, "navigated uncertainty, wrestled with God's call, and immersed herself in body, mind and spirit to following where God leads." Dawna also spoke of how Clara would bring her "well-honed pragmatism, her endless curiosity, her deep faith and her good humour" to the role of bishop.

This humour was on show when, in accordance with custom, Clara knocked on the door of the cathedral three times with her crozier. The dean of the cathedral, Kyle Norman, then deviated slightly from the script by asking, "Who are you and what do you want?" To which Clara and the congregation responded with laughter. Clara broke into laughter again as she sat down on the bishop's chair and tried to adjust her robes.

However, there was nothing but heart-felt sincerity on display as Clara promised to fulfil the obligations and responsibilities of her office to the best of her ability.

While St Paul's Cathedral was packed, around fifty

people joined in online, including some from this diocese, who attended a viewing party at the Synod office. The full event can be watched on YouTube.



Below are some photos from the ordination service. More photos from the service can be viewed on the [Territory of the People website](https://territoryofthepope.org/).



Correction

An earlier version of this article stated that Dawna Wall is the current incumbent at St Michael and All Angels, Victoria. However, Dawna Wall is now the director of Bethany House of Prayer. John Perris is the current incumbent at St Michael and All Angels.

Clarification

An earlier version of this article omitted to mention that Clara Plamondon was mentored at St John the Baptist, Duncan by former primate Andrew Hutchison, and that she later served as the incumbent at St John the Baptist.

Bringing together Christians in our community



Pictured (left to right) are Anna Greenwood-Lee, bishop of the Diocese of Islands and Inlets; Ha Na Park, co-lead minister at Broad View United, Victoria; Gary Gordon, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria; Brigitte McKenzie, deacon at Grace Lutheran Church, Victoria; and Father Abebe Getahun

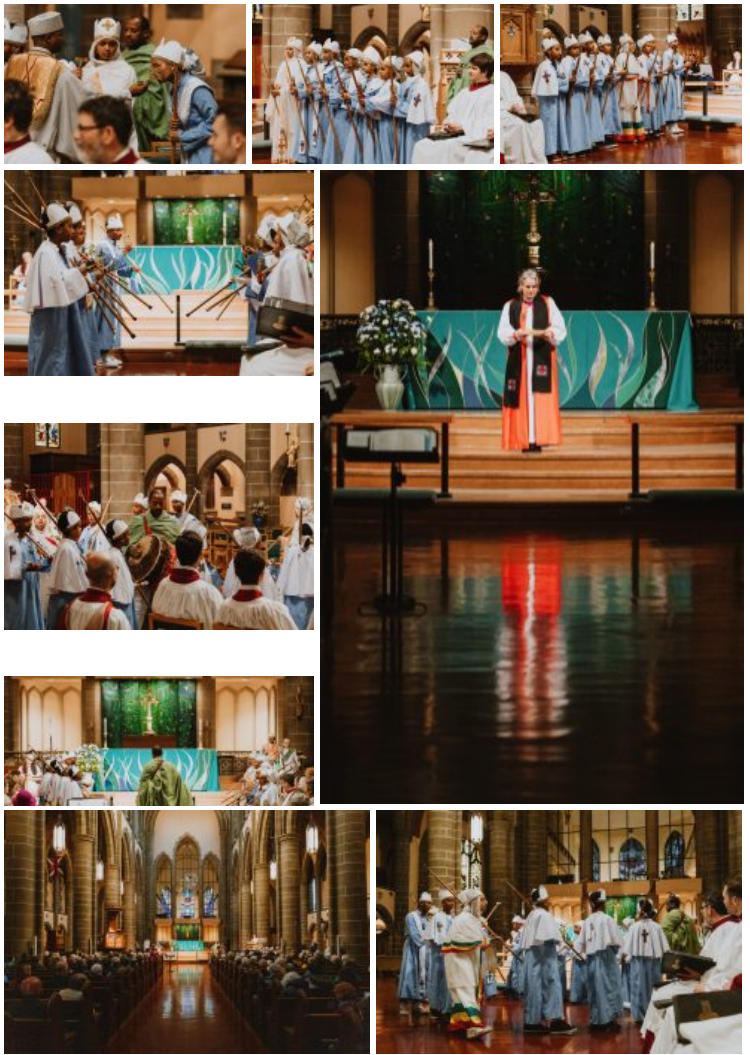
of the Greater Victoria Ethiopian Orthodox St Gabriel Church. Image copyright J. Abram Photography.

By Faith Tides

As part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christ Church Cathedral held a special service that brought together Christians from different denominations. These included attendees from our Anglican diocese, Grace Lutheran Church, Broad View United, the Greater Victoria Ethiopian Orthodox St Gabriel Church of Victoria and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria.

Special guests included Gary Gordon, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria; Brigitte McKenzie, deacon at Grace Lutheran Church, Victoria; Ha Na Park, co-lead minister at Broad View United, Victoria; Brendon Neilson, the executive director of the Diocese of Islands and Inlets; Jeannine Friesen, priest-in-charge of Christ Church Cathedral; and Father Abebe Getahun of the Greater Victoria Ethiopian Orthodox St Gabriel Church.

The Sunday school choir of St Gabriel closed the service by performing the Lord's Prayer.



100,000 bowls of soup



Members of the local community gather in the St Andrew church hall for Christmas dinner. Photo by Sandi De Luca.

By Naomi Racz

After over two decades of serving soup to the local community, St Andrew, Sidney is very close to serving its 100,000th bowl of soup (and may well have served it by time this goes to press).

A small group of volunteers at St Andrew started making soup in 2003 to provide meals for individuals in the community living alone. The ministry, known as Neighbours Lunch, has since grown, with between 16 and 20 volunteers serving around 150 lunches each week. The lunches include soup, buns, desserts, tea, coffee and juice. A vegetarian option is usually available and the group tries to provide a gluten or dairy free, or both, option where possible.

Neighbours Lunch welcomes a broad spectrum of the Sidney community, including church members and unhoused individuals. Sandi De Luca has been co-

ordinating Neighbours Lunch for the last six years. Sandi says they try to make everyone who attends the lunches feel loved. “There is a lot of joy in a few hours. We like to say that we feed the soul as well as the tummy.”

Pre-pandemic, St Andrew was one of four churches in Sidney serving lunches on different days of the week. However, St Andrew is the only church that has resumed its soup lunches. Neighbours Lunch also serves a popular turkey dinner at Christmas and provides soup for the Friends of St Andrew, an outreach program that takes food out on to the streets twice a week to those who need it.

[READ: St Andrew, Sidney parishioners on retreat, sharing food and friendship on the streets](#)

Neighbours Lunch serves soup on Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the church hall (9691 Fourth Street, Sidney). For more information contact admin@standrewssidney.ca or call 250-656-5322.

A journey like no other



Christ in the house of Martha and Mary by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Younger. Image via National Gallery of Ireland, online collection, Public Domain.

By Herbert O'Driscoll

This article first appeared in the [April 2014 issue of the Anglican Journal](#).

You are exhausted and surrounded by an almost palpable fear.

You feel a wave of sadness because of all places, you associate this house, here in Bethany, with warmth, security and friendship.

You recall the last week or two, the shocking intensity of public reaction after the episode with Lazarus. You had to leave the city area, but friends kept you apprised of the furor. The Sanhedrin had met and branded you a national threat. The high priest himself had called for your execution as an urgent political necessity.

Yet you knew that the time for staying away was over. Against their will, you took the faithful group east across the hills to the Jordan Valley road. You spent a couple of nights along the way, using the precious hours to share some reflections. It was the long way back to Bethany, but the safest: down through Jericho and over the valley floor, to the Roman army road that climbed the escarpment then dropped into the village.

That was two days ago. Yesterday, you and the group came here, to the only safe house you have now. Tonight, Martha has given a dinner for the group. But even her warmth and vivaciousness can't overcome the sense of foreboding.

Suddenly, the gathering falls silent. Mary, the quiet one,

the introvert, gets up, crosses the room, takes a small jar and moves toward you. Calmly, she pours oil on your head.

There is a wild outbreak of reactions. One voice cuts across the group, that of Judas—dismissive, sneering, cynical.

You are desperately trying to get a grip on your feelings. You know Mary's act is no sentimental or hysterical gesture. You know this sensitive, quiet woman has exposed the deep, unnamed fears of everyone in the room. Her action forces you to name what you know must be faced. "Leave her alone," you say. "She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial." Death now sits at the table.

Thirty-five years later, writing his book on Patmos, John will remember this moment. He will remember your last week and the journey you must now take through its terrible days and nights.

Sometime in the wakeful hours of the night, you decide to make the first move. You leave the house just after sunrise and walk around the south shoulder of the mountain until the city faces you. It clings to the jagged hills, like an animal at bay, waiting to spring. Later in the morning they bring you the pathetic donkey; the first ragged cheers ring out. Step by scrambling step, you move down onto the stage of the cosmic drama. Crowds cheer and curse you; your body is tensed for the first blow or flung stone.

That night, you return to Bethany, exhausted.

Each day you continue this rhythm. From Bethany to the city, and back; from friendship to confrontation; from public exposure to sleepless hours.

There is constant confrontation now. You can feel the agony of friends, who helplessly watch you. You know very well the rising murmur behind official doors. You are aware a net is closing, but you have decided there is no other way.

Thursday, you book the room, because otherwise it may be too late to share the meal. But there is a terrible difference from the customary tradition. This may be the king's feast, but on this night, the king is the meal, his blood the wine—your body, your blood.

Out into the night. First, you feel paralyzing fear, then an extraordinary sense of peace. Night becomes day. Faces appear and recede; voices rise and fall, spitting questions, abuse, charges. There are the torches of Herod's atrium of lechery and decadence, and later the clink of iron on stone in Pilate's city headquarters.

Now comes the dawn, the shrieking, endless tunnel of the crowds, a sense of falling through blood and pain, lashes and cruel laughter. Familiar voices call and fade, until you are thrown like an animal and the butchery begins. You hang in the blazing sun until the sky mercifully clouds over. And though you call and scream, even God seems no longer with you.

No one can dare walk with you now into the shadowlands. There will be a dawn of terror and glory. The world will split asunder, and death itself will die. Those who love you will weep until their tears turn to joy by the lakeside where they first met you. You will invite them to a simple meal, as once again you invite us to the joy of our Eastertide.

Why the church is called to listen and discern



Photo by [Jack Sharp](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By John J. Thatamanil

Few words are more central to Christian life than “discernment.” A dictionary (Oxford Languages) offers two definitions, one simple, one complex and nuanced:

1. the ability to judge well.
“an astonishing lack of discernment”
2. (in Christian contexts) perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding.
“without providing for a time of healing and discernment, there will be no hope of living through this present moment without a shattering of our common life”

The second of the two definitions acknowledges three things. First, that the word is used in Christian

contexts. Second, that discernment is a kind of “perception,” of seeing in “the absence of judgment.” The term is used when clear criteria for judgment are unavailable, and we are unable to sort out what is at stake. And lastly, it is something that does not come entirely by our own efforts but emerges when we seek “spiritual guidance and understanding.” This second definition, together with its example sentence, is at a pitch of profundity we do not usually expect to find in dictionaries!

The word “discernment” suggests that life routinely presents us with complex situations crying out for judiciousness, but without giving us the information we need to judge rightly. Consider, for example, Jesus’s teaching for us “to be in the world but not of it.” What exactly does that mean? Talk about needing “spiritual guidance and understanding”! How can Christians and the church be in the world — joined in the world’s struggles, pains and longings — without being swept up in patterns of living that seem out of keeping with the values of the kingdom of God? What worldly patterns are inappropriate for individual Christians and the church to adopt?

Consider, for example, that the church has to park what money and properties it holds in the larger market. The church has no choice in the matter. There are limits to what can be squeezed under a mattress. So, we are in the world alright. What would it mean to be “not of” the world in this case? How can the church make decisions shaped by the values of the Beloved Community rather than by the constraints and norms of the market?

Consider, for example, the way in which, through anti-apartheid activist pressure, entire institutions were compelled to disinvest or divest from South Africa

during apartheid. That was a case of discernment in action. More recently, in 2014, my teaching home, Union Theological Seminary, became the first seminary in the world to disinvest from fossil fuels. That too was a case of discerning: that no matter how lucrative fossil fuel investing might be, it can no longer be justified in a time of climate crisis. These decisions were not arrived at by an exhaustive factual analysis of the available data but by a kind of “perception” that comes from “spiritual guidance and understanding.”

What is especially striking is that the pressure groups that led the way in the South African divestment conversation — and are leading the way in today’s ecological divestment movement — emerged not solely from the church. Churches did play a significant role in the South African struggle, but, in many cases, the church comes along in the wake of leadership that comes from the world.

Does this mean that the church routinely learns how “to be in the world but not of it” from the world? Ironically, yes! Should this worry us or cause us concern? Only if the church believes it holds a monopoly on the movement of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told us that the Spirit that equips us for the difficult work of discernment “blows where it chooses.”

I am convinced, more than ever, that we have entered a time in which the church’s own capacity for discernment will require her to listen to anti-racist, anti-capitalist, pro-LGBTQIA2S+ and Indigenous voices. Why? Liberation theologians offer a complex-sounding phrase as an answer: “the epistemological privilege of the poor.” It’s a fancy expression, but its meaning is simple: those on the margins are more likely than the privileged to discern how power really operates. After all, their bodies are on the line. By

contrast, the institutional church has not, until very recently, been on the margins but has been smack dab in the heart of power. How could it possibly discern what its own actions have brought about in the world?

What does this mean for the church in our time? The church's capacity for discernment depends on watching and listening to the world, to see where the Holy Spirit is active. Yes, the church must learn from the world how to be in the world but not of it.

The winding path to ministry, 'Pranglicanism' and sailing

By Vernon Foster

Vernon Foster will be joining the Diocese of Islands and Inlets as the incumbent at St Paul, Nanaimo, from May 1, 2024. Here he tells us a bit about his upbringing, his education and career, the challenges he sees facing the Anglican Communion, and the most inspiring sermons he's heard.



Photo courtesy of Vernon Foster.

I was born and grew up in suburban Pretoria, South Africa. I have lived in Pretoria all my life, with the exception of about 18 months in Johannesburg after my parents got divorced, a year

while doing national service in the South African Navy and two years at the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown.

I was baptized at 25 days old in 1972 in the parish of St Michael and All Angels, Sunnyside. My confirmation was at Corpus Christi, Garsfontein, on March 16, 1988.

I went to Pretoria Boys High School. After school, I wanted to study theology straight away, but my parents encouraged me to do something else before going into the church and theological studies. They felt that I needed something to fall back on.

So, I attended the Pretoria Technikon (now Tshwane University of Technology), where I started studying plant production (basically learning to farm). I confess to being desperately lazy in my studies and soon left that. That's when I went to do national service in the South African Navy. While I was doing that, I decided to try my hand at doing theological studies by correspondence, and that didn't go well either. I think my parents were right about one thing: grow up a little

before you pursue a career in ministry.

When I turned thirty, I bleached my hair to a lovely carrot colour, and made the decision to go to university and get my bachelor of arts degree in theology. This I did at the University of Pretoria. After getting my degree, I spent two years at the College of the Transfiguration, where I got a diploma in ministry. While I was at the seminary in Grahamstown, I started an honours bachelor of theology degree, which I completed in my first year as a deacon.

Currently, I am serving as the assistant chaplain at St Mary's Diocesan School for Girls in Pretoria. I started in this role at the beginning of 2020, and it has been a journey of learning and adapting to a new ministry in a different context. Most of my work at the school revolves around elementary and early middle school students.

Prior to my position at St Mary's DSG, I held two rector positions. From 2018 until the end of 2019, I served as the rector of Corpus Christi in Garsfontein. It was an unusual experience as I grew up in that parish, and my parents are still active members. When I mentioned to the bishop that Jesus said a prophet is not without honour in their own hometown, he responded, "Don't worry, my son, no one is going to confuse you with a prophet."

Prior to my position as rector, I had served my curacy at Corpus Christi from 2007 to 2008, assisting in establishing a new parish in Pretoria East. I just laid a foundation there, but I am pleased that St Anne has grown into a vibrant and active parish.

My first rectorship was a nine-year commitment at Trinity Church in Lynnwood. This church plant

involved collaboration between Anglicans and Presbyterians, who shared facilities and occasional joint worship services on special feast days. During this time, I playfully referred to myself as an "Anglitarian" or perhaps a "Pranglican."

I was elected a canon of the cathedral in 2014 and then again after the new bishop took office in 2018. The responsibility of a canon is to serve as an advisor to the bishop and the diocesan leadership structures. Being elected canon by my peers was a highlight of my time as a priest. It was good to know they believed I had the necessary learning to help lead and guide the conversations on gender and human sexuality in the Diocese of Pretoria.

While sexuality and the differing theological positions on this matter appears to be the greatest challenge to the Anglican church today, I think the challenges are way more complex than that. Don't get me wrong, I am wholly committed to an inclusive church, regardless of one's background, past or current circumstances, or even whom one loves and builds a home with. I think these are simply pegs on which to hang the more complex matter of who makes theological pronouncements on deeply divisive matters, who is in charge, and who fulfils and controls our instruments of unity in the Anglican Communion. There are deep colonial hangovers within the Anglican Communion, and it is these that we will need to come to terms with while we work on finding consensus on other theological matters. In short and to use Justin Welby's analogy, we need to figure out how to live together in the same house while occupying different bedrooms.

I wouldn't say I've heard any unusual sermons but there are two that have stood out for me. The rector of my parish in my teen years at Corpus Christi gave a

sermon on Epiphany, which appealed to my rather scant knowledge of stellar navigation. Father Bob spoke about what the magi might have seen in the night sky that prompted them to seek the Christ child. For me it was about hearing God in unconventional ways.

The other thing that stood out in a sermon was something Bishop Allan Kannemeyer said when he became the Bishop of Pretoria. He told us, “For you I am a bishop, with you I am a priest.”

I love sailing and hope to get to do that when we settle down in Nanaimo. I have found every position in my career deeply fulfilling, having grown from each. I am grateful to God for all the learning, both in good times and challenging times. However, I have always held a special place in my heart for the Mission to Seafarers and would like to have been able to do that work.

I am also a self-taught flautist, and I am particularly fond of Irish music. I believe there is an Irish music group in Nanaimo with which I hope to connect and improve my playing.

Infinitely more than we can ask or imagine

By Lynn Mills

Lynn Mills was ordained on February 3, 2024 by Bishop Anna at St Mary of the Incarnation, Metchosisin. Lynn is the incumbent at St Mary. Here she tells us about her education and the spiritual journey that led to her becoming a priest and scholar.



Lynn Mills holding a two-week-old lamb during a blessing of the animals service. Photo courtesy of Lynn Mills.

I was born in Edmonton, Alberta. My dad was in the air force, so we lived in a number of places during my childhood: Cold Lake, Alberta; Germany; North Bay, Ontario; and Ottawa. This is likely the reason I love to travel. At 19 I volunteered on a kibbutz in Israel for a few

months. I loved it so much I went back the next year for another six months. This is where I met my English husband, who was also volunteering. Our mutual love of travel has taken us around the world, living and working in eight countries and on four continents.

My career before pursuing a theological education was mostly in administration, HR and finance. I have worked for the Canadian and Australian governments and a wide variety of companies, including a hostel in Israel; a hotel in Germany; a medical mission in Nepal; a sheep farm in New Zealand; a ski resort; and a large-scale concert and extreme sport producer in BC. Now, I use my admin and finance skills to assist the finance department of the synod office from time to time.

My spiritual journey begins with my father finding sobriety through Alcoholics Anonymous when I was seven years old. Through Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, the Jesus movement, and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement, my father and mother rediscovered their creator and their faith. One day, at the age of nine, as I was walking to school, I suddenly felt completely filled with the love of Jesus. This love was very tangible and frankly overwhelming. I would describe the experience as an epiphany. God revealed Godself to me through the person of God's son, Jesus. That experience has stayed with me all these years and is almost as intense and tangible now as it was then. It has also been the foundation of my faith and my understanding of a compassionate God.

At the age of 12, during my confirmation process, I asked our priest if I could be an altar server like the boys. I was drawn to the liturgy and the beautiful rituals and symbolism. I wanted to serve God. Fortunately for me, our priest was very progressive for the time (1975), and he suggested I petition the bishop, who agreed. Our bishop thought I was the first female altar server in all of Canada. I did not realize how significant that was at the time. All I knew was that I wanted to serve, and I could see no reason why I couldn't.

Looking back now, I can trace my sense of call to the 12-year-old girl who wanted to be an altar server. While not grasping the theology, serving in the liturgy resonated deeply within me. After we left the Roman Catholic church, and joined the Christian and Missionary Alliance church, I started to think that maybe I could be a missionary. That was, after all, how you served the Lord. Plus, I would get to travel! But the idea of having to raise the funds, to ask for money from churches and individuals, was very uncomfortable for

me. I gave up the idea, but still looked for a way to have a job that would, in essence, be service to God. Unfortunately, there were very few opportunities for women at that time. So, I put it aside, thinking it was just not for me.

When my husband, Phil, and I moved to Vancouver Island in 2006 and started to attend an Anglican parish, I felt like I had come home! In no time at all I was once again serving at the altar as a lay assistant and reader. I served at St John, Cobble Hill for over 10 years and then in Dublin, Ireland at St Ann for five years. In the last two years at St Ann, I was preaching and leading a service of sung matins once a month.

My education has been a bit unorthodox. I never got an undergrad degree, choosing to travel and work instead. I was very fortunate to be able to jump directly into a master of arts in theological studies at Vancouver School of Theology (VST) at the age of 51. What an absolute gift it was to study formally after so many years. I loved all my courses. They were water to a thirsty soul! The professors engaged my mental and spiritual intelligence. They challenged my understanding of scripture and my theology. I resisted the call to the priesthood and answered the call to teach instead. This led me to Dublin, Ireland, where I earned a PhD in biblical studies. I chose a topic that would allow me to conduct research in Israel. It was a joy to return to Jerusalem on three occasions for extended stays of one to three months. My plan was to return to Vancouver Island, continue as a lay minister and teach at VST and in parishes.

However, the Holy Spirit had other ideas and she can be very persistent and patient. When I learned that I could be both priest and professor, I stopped resisting and started the discernment process online, while still

in Dublin, during COVID-19. When we returned home in 2022, I started a diploma in denominational studies to fill in the pastoral and preaching classes I had avoided the first time around at VST. I have just completed the final course and will graduate this May. Concurrently, I have been teaching at VST this academic year and have done some parish teaching.

I would say that I am now in my ideal posting. Priest and scholar. I am thrilled to be serving St Mary, Metchosin quarter time, and as respite or pulpit supply in other parishes as needed and available. I love to serve in all the holy moments: baptism, eucharist, confession and absolution, weddings, anointing of the sick, and funerals. I want to stand on holy ground with God's children. Phil and I are very happy to have found a spiritual home in the neo-monastic Emmaus Community in downtown Victoria, with whom we pray the daily offices. I am extremely fortunate to be able to serve in parishes in the morning and still be a part of our Emmaus Community worship at the AbbeyChurch on Sunday afternoons.

I love our scriptures, both canonical and extra-canonical, and want to share that love with others. I strongly believe that people in the pews have been done a terrible disservice by not being given the education their clergy receive in seminaries. I once heard that religion is like a swimming pool, all the noise is in the shallow end. In our time, the loudest voice is the far right. While most people in the pews of mainline churches disagree with that voice, they are ill-equipped to answer it. We have to change that!

We Together 2024

WE TOGETHER DIOCESAN CONFERENCE

April 12-13, 2024

By Faith Tides

We Together 2024 will take place on Friday, April 12 and Saturday, April 13 at the Baumann Centre and St John the Divine, Victoria.

[Register here](#)

Registration opens March 1, 2024 and closes April 1, 2024.

About We Together 2024

We Together is our regular (once every other year) diocesan conference, to remind us of the ways we are connected; we are stronger together. We are bound in countless ways, in our structures, in our prayers and through the stories we tell. We are each others concern, and we are each others gift.

This year we are continuing to focus on our context. Building on the “here in this place” theme from We Together 2022, we will be looking at what it means to serve and minister in the most non-religious context in North America. We have unique challenges and unique opportunities.

The conference will begin on Friday evening, April 12, with an evening banquet at the Baumann Centre, followed by an opening address by our executive director, Brendon Neilson. On Saturday, we will gather at St John the Divine, Victoria. The program will include keynote speaker John Thatamanil, our diocesan theologian. John will be presenting two sessions with small group dialogue following each. We will end our time with the celebration of the eucharist, with Bishop Anna preaching and presiding.

For those looking for accommodation, the diocese has a corporate rate at the Inn at Laurel Point. If you phone the hotel (250-386-8721) and mention the rate, it will be applied.

Finacial aid information

If you would like to attend but the costs are unaffordable, please select the subsidized ticket rate and we will be in touch with you about completing the grant form. Funds have been provided by the Education Trust Board with the requirement that a form be completed. The available grants will cover travel, food and accommodation. There is max. of \$175/person and funds will be distributed according to the [diocesan travel reimbursement policy](#).

All grant funds will be mailed by cheque after the event is over and once the form is complete.

Schedule

Friday, April 12, 2024

5:30 p.m. Doors open and registration

6 p.m. Banquet and opening session by Brendon Neilson

9 p.m. End of event

Saturday, April 13, 2024

8:30 a.m. Doors open, coffee and registration

9 a.m. Opening prayer and welcome

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. John Thatamanil: *When Did God Go Missing? The Disenchantment of the World*

10:30 – 11 a.m. Coffee break

11 – 11:30 p.m. Small groups discussions/debriefs

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. Lunch (lunch not provided)

1:15 – 2:15 p.m. John Thatamanil: *Breaking Bread Together – Practices of the Church in an Interreligious Era*

2:15 – 2:45 p.m. Small groups discussions/debriefs

3 – 4 p.m. Closing eucharist

4:30 p.m. End of day

About the speakers



John Thatamanil

John J. Thatamanil is professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York. He is the author of *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative*

Theology of Religious Diversity (2020) and *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament; An East-West Conversation*. His areas of research include theologies of religious diversity, comparative theology, philosophical theology and eco-theology. He is committed to seeking interreligious wisdom by learning from the practices and insights of other religious traditions. He is also a past president of the North American Paul Tillich Society.

John is an Anglican priest in and diocesan theologian for the Diocese of Islands and Inlets. John was born in Kerala, India and migrated to the US as a child when he was just shy of 9. He traces his love for Indian religious traditions to his desire to learn more about what it means to be an Indian kid growing up in the US.

John is married to Kate Newman, who is the religious educator at Christ Church Cathedral School and currently a PhD student at the University of Victoria. He is father to Moses Dryden and Kate Fulton-John.

The “Two Kates” problem is a source of regular hilarity at home.



Brendon Neilson

Brendon Neilson has worked in the synod office since 2018 and currently serves as executive director of the diocese. He has a PhD in theology and his academic interests have always been in what theology looks like in the lives of the

faithful. He has an underlying conviction that faith is made true in the living of it. While property issues and redevelopment projects take up most of his time these days, the question of what faithfulness looks like in the systems and structures of our diocese is central to how he approaches the work.

Brendon grew up in an evangelical holiness tradition and has been shaped by the faith communities and places that have been a part of his journey — New Brunswick, Alberta and New Zealand. He has now found a home here in Victoria and in the Anglican church. Discovering and understanding the inheritance of our diocese (the good and the hard) is one ingredient for discerning a faithful future together. We Together will be an opportunity for us to explore this, together.

He is married to Melanie, who is a teacher (SD 61). Their three-year-old daughter, Remy, keeps them quite busy with adventures of all sorts.