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Faith Tides

RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

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This PDF is a simple printable document of Faith Tides online, which can be found at faithtides.ca. Questions or comments can be sent to the editor at faithtides@bc.anglican.ca.

May Christ be born anew



Photo by [Anne Nygård](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Anna Greenwood-Lee*

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.” (Mark 13:8)

As we finish one Christian year and begin another, I am struck with the violence of the Biblical texts and how the texts speak right into our time. The wars rage on; millions live without shelter, food or sanitation. So many of the kingdoms of this world are in disarray. We are at the halfway point of the decade that surely must be known as the turbulent 2020s, and every indication is that the turbulence is only going to get worse.

In Advent the scriptures remind us that in dark times we must keep awake. We must keep watch. The Advent texts are apocalyptic, just as the times we are living in are apocalyptic. The word “apocalypse” is Greek and refers to things that were hidden from view now

becoming clear. When an apocalypse happens, that which was previously hidden is laid bare. For before there can be a new heaven and a new Earth, before the Earth can be remade as a place of interconnectedness, beauty, love and justice; the pride, the greed, the hypocrisy, the unsustainability of the current system needs to be uncovered and needs to be seen.

It is time for us to take a long hard look at ourselves and our world. I am afraid that we are going to be remembered as the generation who fought so hard for our standard of living, our homes, vehicles, vacations and luxuries, who spent so much time staring at our screens, that we failed to notice that the world is burning, that the poor are suffering, that children are starving.

Perhaps, this year, more than ever, we need to hear the voice of the one in the wilderness who is going to yell at us, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Luke 3:7) And then, when we helplessly ask the prophet what we are to do, to listen to his instructions: “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” (Luke 3:11)

The Christian life is at once incredibly difficult and incredibly simple. John the Baptist, like Jesus, reminds us that we must love our neighbours as ourselves. We must share food and clothing. We must be the good Samaritan to all in need. We must go out of our way to provide for the needs of others, even when it means self-sacrifice and inconvenience.

This Advent, may we keep awake, and this Christmas, may Christ be born anew, in our midst, in our lives and in our actions.

An invitation to morning prayer

Amidst the chaos and darkness of our current world, I find it helpful to begin each day with morning prayer, a short Anglican service of scripture readings and prayers that reconnects me with God, with our tradition and with ancient wisdom. While it was my practice to say or read morning prayer using the [Mission of St. Clare](#), I've recently switched to using the [Church of England app](#) that allows me to listen to morning prayer, beautifully read and beautifully sung. If you're not a morning person, both have evening and night prayer as well. As you are able and as suits your schedule, I'd invite you, this Advent, to also make the daily office part of your spiritual life.

Lay leadership in worship course to run in spring 2025



Image courtesy of Ascend Anglican photo bundle

By Ingrid Andersen

Many of the parishes in the diocese are “in transition” and do not necessarily have a priest to celebrate the eucharist each Sunday. Additionally, parishes are rediscovering the daily office and considering ways to have lay-led weekday services. Lay-led services are an opportunity for renewal: to encourage lay people to live into the vows they made in their baptismal covenant, which reminds us that every one of us, lay or ordained, is called to participate in worship by virtue of our baptism.

We are asked, “Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?” We answer, “I will, with God’s help.” If your parish is often or occasionally without clergy and you are a lay leader who would be able and willing to lead in services, you are invited to apply online to be considered by the bishop for a nomination to attend the upcoming eight-week Lay Leadership in Worship course. Upon successful completion of the course, a conversation will be held about how and when you might help lead services of the word in your parish.

The Diocese of Islands and Inlets is presenting its fifth offering of the Lay Leadership in Worship course from early March to the beginning of June 2025. The course will provide the skills and resources for laity to lead worship services, morning and evening prayer, and the liturgy of the word (a church service without the eucharist).

To date, more than 80 lay leaders have been successfully trained in the diocese. 54 licensed lay ministers serve regularly in parishes throughout the diocese. Regardless of their knowledge and experience, all participants go on to deepen their understanding of liturgy and the offices, and gain confidence to become more effective leaders of worship.

Course description

The eight sessions will equip lay leaders to:

- Understand the purpose of liturgy
- Follow the liturgical year and the lectionary, and examine their purpose in worship and liturgical formation
- Understand our Anglican, geographical, social and historical context
- Become familiar with the broad principles and structure of the offices in the BCP and the BAS, as well as the liturgy of the word
- Learn to plan worship collaboratively in your parish
- Access the available liturgical, lectionary, prayer and sermon resources needed to plan and lead a worship service
- Reflect on lessons learned from the practical implementation of course content

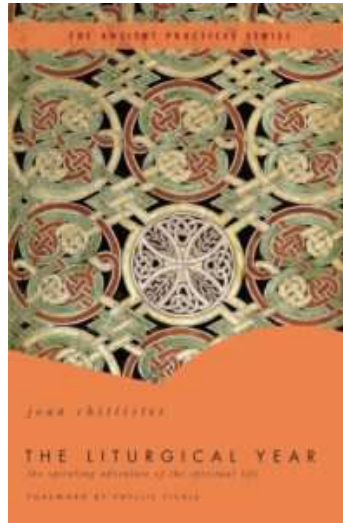
Dates and location

- Via Zoom, on Thursdays from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- March 6, 13, 20 and 27; April 3, 10 and 24; and June 5
- Three mentored services during a month of mentored practical experience in your parish/region, followed by a final Zoom class on Thursday, June 5

Cost

Free; however participants must purchase (or borrow) their own copy of the required reading well in advance of the course.

Required reading



[The Liturgical Year: the spiraling adventure of the spiritual life](#) by Joan Chittister, Ancient Practices Series, 2009

Qualifications

All those wishing to lead the liturgy of the word must provide proof of the following before applying

for the course:

1. a valid Police Information Check (with Vulnerable Persons Sector check)
2. completed [Safe Church](#) training within the last five years
3. read the [diocesan policies](#) and signed the policy acknowledgement form
4. approval of your parish incumbent (or, in the absence of an incumbent, your warden or regional archdeacon) to lead the liturgy of the word in your parish

How to apply

Those interested should complete the [online form](#). Applications will be accepted from Dec. 1, 2024 to Jan. 17, 2025.

In partnership with Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee, this course is brought to you by Ingrid Andersen, incumbent at Church of the Advent, Colwood, and other teachers and facilitators from throughout the diocese and beyond.

Churches in the diocese host a year of prayer in the style of Taizé



Image copyright: J. Abram Photography

By Naomi Racz

This year, three churches in the diocese hosted prayer in the style of Taizé, as part of an effort by ecumenical churches to bring this style of worship to new neighborhoods and new churches in Victoria.

Prayer in the style of Taizé had been offered on a three-month rotation at churches of different denominations throughout downtown Victoria since 1996. This offering was sponsored by the Downtown Victoria Churches Association (DVCA) and led by its ecumenical steering committee. For over 25 years, the steering committee met regularly. However, by early 2020, the DVCA had disbanded and many of the older committee members were ready to step down. And by

March, all churches were shuttered.

In 2024, with the support of former DVCA committee members, prayer in the style of Taizé was hosted by three neighbourhood churches on the Saanich Peninsula. The winter rotation (January to March) was hosted by St Philip's, Oak Bay, the spring rotation (April to June) was hosted at St Stephen's, Parish of Central Saanich, and the fall rotation (September to November) at St Michael and All Angels, Victoria.

The Taizé Community

The monastic Taizé Community was founded in France, in the village of Taizé by Roger Schutz, known as Brother Roger. Brother Roger was originally from Switzerland but during the war he felt called to help refugees. So, in 1940, at the age of 25, he moved to France. He bought a property in the village of Taizé and, together with his sister, sheltered refugees, including Jews.

After the war, and after a period spent in Geneva for his safety and where Brother Roger gathered his first brothers, the nascent community returned to Taizé. One of Brother Roger's guiding principles in the creation of the Taizé Community was ecumenism and today the community consists of 80 brothers from different church backgrounds: Catholic, Anglican and Protestant.

The brothers, along with the many young people who visit Taizé, attend church for prayers three times per day. A typical order of prayer includes songs, Bible readings, intercessions, a blessing and a period of silence. There is no eucharist or sermon, and the readings and songs are done in multiple languages. The songs are meditative, with a few words or phrases

repeated, sometimes with accompanying music and other times performed as a chant. The worship space is simply decorated, with icons and candles.

Prayer in the style of Taizé to continue at St Philip's



Several parishioners at St Philip's, Oak Bay had been to the Taizé Community in France and were keen to offer prayer in the style of Taizé at their church. Through hosting the winter rotation, those parishioners felt they gained the background they needed to begin offering prayer in the style of Taizé at St Philip's on a more permanent basis. A committee of four, including St Philip's music director Judith Slimmon, started hosting a monthly prayer in the style of Taizé in September, and it will run through the winter months until March 2025. The services are at 7 p.m. on the last Thursday of the month, with the exception of December, when the service will be on New Year's Eve.

Although Judith was not among the parishioners who had visited Taizé, France, she had previously experienced Hindu chanting, so it was this aspect of prayer in the style of Taizé that appealed to her. "I was aware of the power of chanting as a meditative practice. It has the capacity to centre and help one find a place of rest and peace. The ecumenical aspect was also important." The services at St Philip's have seen readings being given in six different languages,

including Norwegian and Hindi.

Committee member Yvette Bird oversees the setting up and cleaning down of the church for the service, including lighting the candles, which are an important part of the service and the reason why the services will only be offered during the darker months. So far, prayer in the style of Taizé at St Philip's has been well received, with between 25 to 50 people attending.

St Michael's inspired by ecumenical services

Over at St Michael's and All Angels, Victoria, incumbent John Perris was familiar with the Taizé Community and used Taizé style songs in his services but had never attended prayer in the style of Taizé. John was also drawn to taking part because of the ecumenical aspect. "It's very communal, everyone sings all the songs," says John. "It is a beautiful service, very meditative. There's just one reading read in several languages, which we've tried out at the service."

Prayer in the style of Taizé ran at St Michael's on the third Friday of the month, and saw between 40 to 50 attendees, most of whom had been involved in prayer in the style of Taizé pre-COVID 19. There were around 10 participants from St Michael's, some of whom helped at the services.

Among them were Deb Ayotte, who has been attending St Michael's for six years, and Pat Gerrard, who is also a newer parishioner to St Michael's. Deb described the services as calming and meditative, while Pat emphasized the importance of the ecumenical aspect of the services. "There was a depth to the service that made us feel the unity in the room," says Pat. "Ecumenical services are much fuller in spirit, some of the barriers are gone." Both Deb and Pat plan to attend

prayer in the style of Taizé again next year.

In 2025, prayer in the style of Taizé will be hosted by the United Church. The winter rotation (January to March) will be hosted by the Abbey Church, the spring rotation (April to June) by Broad View United, and the fall rotation (September to November) by Esquimalt United Church. The services will be at 6 p.m. on the third Friday of the month, with the exception of Feb. 14 and April 25.

Church of the Advent, Colwood also offers prayer in the style of Taizé on the first Saturday of the month (except August and January) at 5 p.m. Christ Church Cathedral holds a centering prayer with meditation every Monday at 10 a.m. in the cathedral chapel room.

What price, a blanket?



Photo by [Stephane Gagnon](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Brenda Morgan*

I am on a trip from Canada to the UK, where most

members of my family live. I walk into my cousin's family room, where I notice a blanket hanging across the back of the sofa. It looks familiar, grey with a tartan pattern in watermelon-red. Can this be the blanket that I had taken with me to boarding school over six decades ago? It looks in excellent condition.

My cousin tells me my sister gave it to her after my mother died. I lift up the corner and see that the label with my name is still there. This was the winter blanket, added to the lighter summer one when the weather in the Himalayas started to get frosty. It was from the days my family lived in India, before their emigration. It had been imported from England, made with the finest merino wool, tightly woven.

The decades suddenly evaporate, and I am little again, desperately homesick. I want my family; I want my home; I want my mother—and the warmth of the blanket doesn't offer the comfort I'm seeking. My cousin tells me to take the blanket home to Canada, seeing as it's mine. But I know it's best left in her house. It's best I leave that chapter behind. "You keep it," I tell her, "it's still in the family." I'm glad it didn't get sold. Anyway, what price the memories, the history, the emotions? She tells me she is surprised the blanket is so old because it is in such good condition.

It was, after all, the best quality merino wool—made in England.

I emigrate to Canada, leaving all my family behind. There, I buy a Hudson's Bay point blanket. I want something quintessentially Canadian. I'm impressed by the colourful stripes, the thickness of the blanket, the quality of the wool. Using it makes me feel somewhat Canadian. I'm happy to use it. I have a new country, a new marriage and a new family.

These are happy days, sometimes. I'm an immigrant and feel the loss of my old home, my family, my friends. I feel dislocated and foreign. The blanket feels warm, but its colours are of this new place I'm unaccustomed to. More than fifty years later, I still own it. Should I sell it? What price the memories, the emotions, the history? It's over half a century old, the blanket of an immigrant, still in excellent condition.

It was, after all, the best quality merino wool—made in England.

I read an account of the early history of British colonialism in Canada and the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company, first given a royal charter to trade and then to acquire territory. Central to the history is the story of the HBC blanket, which begins to be sold about the year 1779. The blankets, produced in England and prized for their warmth, are traded with the Indigenous peoples for beaver pelts. The beaver, once ubiquitous, becomes almost extinct, until the fashion changes and the fur is no longer needed for top hats. The blankets, however, continue to be traded, now for territory. The story of the blanket takes a sinister turn.

There is no vaccine for smallpox, not yet. One awful fact about the virus is that it continues to live and spread through surfaces like clothing or bedding. Are infected blankets sold by mistake? Do individual traders pick up infected blankets marked for the incinerator for nothing and then make the rapacious and evil decision to sell what they know is unfit to sell in order to make an enormous profit?

Blankets now are being traded not just for pelts but for territory. Indigenous people are not just losing their land, but they are becoming terribly ill and are dying.

The Indigenous population is decimated. Is it too cynical to believe the British colonial government is making a deliberate decision to trade infected blankets for a massive land-grab? What makes this possible is that the blankets are so long-lasting and strong. They stay in good condition for years and can therefore be sold second-hand.

They are, after all, the best quality merino wool—made in England.

Through some random reading, I happen upon a startling piece of history. It is to do with the history of the place where I now live, Ten Mile Point, near Cadboro Bay, in Victoria, BC. I know I live in the lands once occupied by First Nations, and most of the meetings and events I attend give land acknowledgement to “the ləkʷw əŋən people known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt nation,” but the statement doesn't give me an image of what was here before and what actually happened. The information I come across gives me that. It deals with the Douglas Treaties.

The wily James Douglas, Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, acting as representative of the British colonial government, makes several treaties with the Indigenous peoples of the island, and a particular one signed in 1850 was with the tribe or family of the Cheko-nein. How much is lost in translation during these meetings? What do the chiefs of the tribes understand is happening?

Nevertheless, whether or not they fully understand what they are doing, all the land from Gonzales Point to PKOLS (Mount Douglas), and east to the shoreline, is given by them to the Hudson's Bay Company, in exchange for £79, and blankets. What price, the

blankets? We are talking here about part of Oak Bay, Oaklands, Uplands, Cadboro Bay, Ten Mile Point, University of Victoria grounds, Gordon Head, PKOLS—all for a bundle of blankets.

They are, after all, the best quality merino wool—made in England.

This article was written on September 30, 2024, the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and is dedicated to the memory of Murray Sinclair, seeker of truth. A version of this article originally appeared in the Prescription, the quarterly publication from St Luke's, Cedar Hill.

Baby Jesus in a walnut shell



Photo by [Phill Brown](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Hannah Main-van der Kamp*

In the weeks before Christmas, many years ago, a little girl in my extended family pleaded with her mother for a My Little Pony. You might remember those pastel,

plastic ponies with pink and green manes and tails, complete with tiny brushes and combs. It was her heart's desire. Her family was financially challenged at that time and she was told, no, not possible. I was there when she unwrapped the gift from her parents. As she lifted out those ponies, she went silent. Turning to face her mother she quietly said, "Mommy! I am going to love you forever!"

That was not about consumerism. That was the experience of "true gift," balm for a child's heart. It was a salvific moment, full of grace. The sensation of hope fulfilled shapes a child, indelibly. Sure, to an unimaginative adult it may be an artificial toy. But you'd be surprised what these vintage ponies are worth now. So many adults still attached to favourite childhood toys collect them. Not for the thing itself but for the sensual memory.

Children do not need a lot of gifts. The more there are, the less they are appreciated. But should you have an opportunity to give a gift, consider praying for inspiration. Many families are under financial restraint. Gifting can be a burden. Ask for insight about the very right, inexpensive thing. We are not governed by the secular model where a price tag increases worth.

What forms the Advent imagination of children? If raised by secular parents, it may be a Winnie the Pooh Advent calendar, the Grinch, Snoopy, a visit with Santa in a mall, Rudolph, gift advertising and nativity scenes with candy canes and a magic star. Not to forget toy soldiers and a drummer boy. Some of that is fun and some of it is utterly banal. For children raised in homes where there is awareness of the sacred in the Christian understanding and waiting for the coming of Christ, it may be Advent candles and songs, shepherds, wise men, angels and a special baby. Plus, almost

inescapable, all the secular stuff listed above.

Are these two in conflict? Not for children. Their imaginations are pliable. But for parents, godparents, extended family and the parish family, the diminishing of the first and the strengthening of the latter are a sacred task.

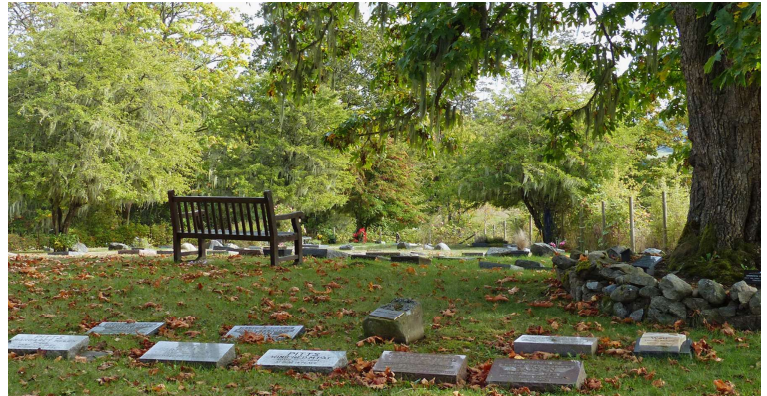
The last time I was in the audience at a Christmas musical, the lyrics were fun and the children's chorus enthusiastic. Afterwards, there was a sing-along from a booklet of Christmas songs and carols. We ploughed through all the verses of "We Three Kings" and came to a verse with very heavy theology: "Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying / Sealed in the stone cold tomb." An awkward clash. The crucifixion does not sit easy between *onehorseopensleigh* and *wewishyouamerry*. What do children make of that? That it's all the same; that it's all make belief until you grow up and shed Santa?

Awe, wonder, intrigue, mystery, strangeness and celebration; all of these will impact children. Who gets to do the impressing? The rec centre background music? The mall's giant, over-decorated tree? The candles and music of Christmas Eve in church? All of them, whether done well or not, leave an impression. They compete for space. New, permanent neural networks are formed in the young brain, some of them not positive. This is not an argument in favour of restraint in Advent or against merry celebration at Christmas. It's a caution about curating the environment.

When my niece MW, now a grandmother herself, was young, she was an industrious crafter of decorations and cards. We kept some of them: the knitted candy canes and the sparkly stars made of shells. My favourite

of her creations is a tiny baby Jesus, wrapped in tissue swaddling clothes and laid tenderly in a walnut half shell. So delicate, the Lord so vulnerable—He who is also the lord of life. What was she thinking when she made that? She was thinking five-year-old thoughts. Will there be chocolate in my Advent calendar tomorrow or will my brother sneak it? Can we go to a farm to see the animals bow down at midnight on Christmas Eve? Can we get a puppy this year? Ouch! I put the needle through my skin. "Away in a Manger," she hummed.

Historical St Stephen's a hidden gem



The grounds of St Stephen's Anglican Church. Image courtesy of John Beresford.

By Bob Buchanan



We acknowledge that this church property is on the ancestral lands of the WSÁNEĆ and Coast Salish peoples.

As you enter the five-acre grounds of St Stephen's Anglican Church, off Mount Newton Cross Road, Saanichton, you immediately feel that you are in a special historical place—a place of peace and serenity.



The St Stephen's church building is tucked away in the southeast corner of the acreage, nestled beside the tranquil cemetery. Built in 1862, the church is the oldest continually operating church in the diocese. Part of the cemetery is devoted to pioneer families from Saanich. The cemetery continues to offer burial sites by reservation (contact cemetery custodian Howard Kolson at 250-896-4531).



The church will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., starting Dec. 2, 2024, for visitors to sit and be still, knowing that God is present. Sunday service is held at 11:15 a.m. During July and August, services are at 10 a.m. every other Sundays, alternating with services at St Mary's, the other church in the Parish of Central Saanich. The Christmas Eve service is at 4:00 p.m and the Christmas Day service is held at St Mary's at 10 a.m.



St Stephen's is available for baptisms, weddings or celebrations of life for up to 100 attendees. The property has an open, grassy area of about two acres, ideal for walking pets, or having a picnic with family

and friends, or a corporate picnic with coworkers.

On the property resides the St Francis pet memorial pathway and garden, a place to visit and remember pets that have passed on, or a place to sit peacefully with your present four-legged companion. Pet memorial bricks can be purchased for \$50 each, plus a suggested minimum donation of \$50. Join us with your pet for an animal blessing service on Oct. 5, 2025 at 1 p.m. in the garden.

At the entrance to the property is the St Stephen's memorial church hall, which is available for events on weekends and for evening functions during the week. The facility offers banquet-style seating and capacity for up to 120 people. The facility also houses a large, commercial kitchen, ideally suited for hosting events such as church council and corporate day retreats, as well as baptisms, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and celebration of life receptions. Groups such as strata councils, artists, photographers and dog club members may find this church hall meets their needs as well. An office and boardroom space are available in the hall for a short- or long-term lease.

For testimonials, visit the website of the [Parish of Central Saanich](#). To inquire about potential bookings, contact one of the church wardens:

Lynda Clifford at 250-516-6478

Bob Buchanan at 250-818-5340

All Saints by-the-Sea celebrates 30th anniversary

By Lolla Devindisch



For Anglicans on Salt Spring Island, this year's season of Thanksgiving was the perfect opportunity to share with the community their celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the dedication of All Saints by-the-Sea. The service of blessing held on Oct. 9, 1994, for their new church, was remembered and embraced in October 2024 over two weekends.

In 1993, under the leadership of the incumbent at the time, Barry Valentine, and after more than a year of thought and preparation, old St George's Church, which had stood across the road since 1940 was prepared for transformation into All Saints by-the-Sea, which was to become the thriving hub of worship and creative activity it is today. Only a few still remember being part of an excited crowd of community members and parishioners who stood by to watch the old church be lifted, turned around, and carried by Nickel Bros to the prepared foundations over the road. Everyone held their collective breath as the delicate task of lowering it into place was perfectly accomplished. Old St George's now formed the heart of the project.

It took a year for the completion of All Saints by-the-Sea, which included up to 30,000 hours of volunteer labour from the community. When it was time for the dedication, several days of celebration were shared with islanders, including an evening of dance, a concert, a play, an ecumenical hymn singing and a dinner, all in thanksgiving for a project smoothly accomplished.

From then until now, regular worship services have continued, on Sundays and during the week. Appreciated for its ambiance and outstanding acoustics, the church is also a favourite venue for countless concerts. The halls are used by groups of all kinds, for meetings, fitness and dance classes, bridge events, community meals and much more.

The 30th anniversary celebrations echoed the festivities of 1994. Visitors and islanders were invited to join in the two weekends of thanksgiving. The first, on Saturday, Oct. 5, began with an open house at All Saints by-the-Sea, where some of the history of the transformation was visible in photo displays, a CBC

news video of the move in 1993 and posters of subsequent creative endeavours, all served up with light refreshments during the afternoon. This was followed by a concert in the church featuring music, song and dance, performed by several Friends of All Saints who have contributed to concerts and services offered throughout the past thirty years, highlighting the rich musical tradition of the parish.

The celebrations continued on Thanksgiving Sunday with the service of holy eucharist followed by a delicious lunch, featuring cake, balloons and gratitude for everything that All Saints by-the-Sea and the Anglican parish means to the community of Salt Spring Island.

On Scrooge, the prophets and God's love



Photo by [Zoe](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By David Peterson

For years, Alastair Sim in the 1951 *A Christmas Carol* has been so dear to my heart that Christmas does not feel complete unless I've watched it (at least once)! Many of us smile while watching Scrooge's joy at his redemption. One year, a friend asked, "Why does Scrooge have to be threatened?" A good question!

Scrooge experiences a deep conversion, in which he comes to understand how life has shaped and molded him in ways that he now laments. On Christmas morning, he begins to change his behaviour, to undo damages. Or, in Christian terms, he repents: a radical change in direction, a profound shift in one's behaviour and attitudes.

So, where did my friend's question come from? In part, it comes from a culture that views moral laws with skepticism and is generally suspicious of rules.

Why does Scrooge need to be threatened? First, a clarification of terms is in order. "Threat" is a difficult word. We associate threats with power and with the danger of being hurt if we do not comply. We must, however, acknowledge a more positive aspect of this word. Threats are also warnings. They are messages that try to draw our attention to the fact that there are unpleasant, even fatal possibilities if we are not careful. Consider what would occur if we didn't enforce societal laws: speed limits, for example.

In this light, threats and warnings are necessary for our safety and well-being. Stop signs, for instance, warn and threaten us that there is the potential for danger to ourselves and others.

If we consider the question, "Why does Scrooge need to be threatened?" through the lens of our Jewish heritage, we turn to the prophets. The Biblical prophets

were less concerned with prophecy than with pointing out the potential consequences of the behavioural choices of the people. The prophets hit the alarm bell to warn the people that their societal choices were contrary to the terms of their relationship with God and that they were breaking the agreed upon covenant. The covenant was a love relationship in which it was understood that if the people honoured God's ways and wishes, they would live safely on the land and enjoy God's protection. The prophets were not using power to make the people comply, but they were (in the best sense of the word) threatening: making the people aware of the consequences of rejecting their relationship with God.

In more familiar terms, couples in which both individuals work to care for and support the other are keeping their relationship covenant well. It doesn't take an expert to foretell what will happen if one member strays or starts to neglect the other. Does this person know how their path will lead to disaster? Not always. Often, we need a warning to scare us into keeping ourselves safe.

Perhaps today's environmentalists act as modern prophets. They point out how our choices are leading to higher oceans, erratic weather and extinction of species on an unprecedented scale. They threaten and warn us to change our ways.

Through the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future Scrooge sees his past and how his actions have shaped him up to the present. He also sees a glimpse of the future. With horror he realizes that some actions are irrevocable: what is done is done. Everyone knows that this is true: how often we wish we could change the past and make better choices.

A Christmas Carol is hopeful, for Scrooge's regret and remorse demonstrate that there is hope, which triumphs over despair. When we see our faults and demonstrate regret, then others may see our sincerity and open themselves up to healing a broken relationship. This is true for human relationships and our relationship with God.

Why does Scrooge need to be threatened? Because he can no longer see the direction his life is heading in. The ghosts are not threatening him because they enjoy their power over Scrooge; they are trying to protect him from the consequences of his actions.

The joy of this story is that it is not too late. How terrible that would have been. The story offers us hope. I recall a Catholic priest friend of mine who said that our last breath is our last chance to get things right with God. Afterwards, there is no hope. Personally, I found that view offensive and that it made life a bit like the old game show *Beat the Clock*. I do not believe in a God that gives up on us, in life and in life beyond life. The God I worship seeks to bring all humanity to his care and will not stop offering his love. It is up to Scrooge, and each of us, to accept that love. It invites us to go to Bethlehem and, like the shepherds and magi, meet the one who is our saviour.

Acting Primate signs letter to PM on Gaza, Canadian Christian declaration on antisemitism



By Faith Tides

Acting Primate Anne Germond and National Bishop Susan Johnson have co-signed a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, calling for “a full and sustained ceasefire, for the release of all captives, for the immediate flow of lifesaving food, water, aid, fuel and humanitarian assistance for the millions of Gazans suffering at this time, for an end to all arms transfers to Israel, and the end of occupation.”

The letter also expresses disappointment in Canada’s

abstention from the Sept.18 United Nations motion calling on Israel to end its “unlawful presence” in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank. The letter further calls on the government of Canada to uphold international law.

Anne Germond and Susan Johnson have also signed the [Canadian Christian declaration on antisemitism](#). The declaration was initiated by Rev. Andrew Bennet,

former Canadian ambassador of religious freedom, in response to the Statistics Canada data showing a 71% increase in antisemitic hate crimes in 2023. The declaration condemns this rise in antisemitism and affirms that the Christian leaders who have signed it stand “shoulder-to-shoulder” with their “Jewish cousins.” Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee has also signed the declaration.
