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RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

March & April 2025

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.

Salvation in an interconnected world



Photo by [Hannah Busing](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

The church, over the centuries, has held and continues to hold many different theories of atonement. Most of these theories centre around how Jesus' death and resurrection were salvific. It was shocking that God incarnate was crucified by the Empire and resurrected in bodily form, and people struggled, and continue to struggle, with what this means.

While we all have different understandings of the saving power of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and while none of these understandings will ever be complete, I think one of the major things we need to pay attention to is whether it is individual or corporate.

The early understandings of atonement and salvation

held by the church were corporate. Christ's death and resurrection was saving for *all* of humanity. Christ's death and resurrection defeated evil and death in a very real way and that altered the shape of reality for *all* people.

However, over the centuries, there was a shift in some circles to a more individual understanding of salvation. Anselm, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109, was hugely influential in what is now termed "substitutionary atonement," the idea that Christ's death was a substitute for the death of others.

While Anselm understood this in a corporate sense (i.e. Christ saved all of us from sin and death), the Reformation initiated the move to a more individualistic understanding of salvation, in which it is up to each individual to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and saviour in order to be saved. The Enlightenment's "I think therefore I am" crept into theology and became, "I believe therefore I am saved."

In July 2009 then-Presidenting Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori of The Episcopal Church spoke of the "heresy of individual salvation." She upset some evangelical folk in saying this, but I think her words were prophetic in pointing out that we are never — as Christians or as humans — ever saved alone.

We are mid-way through the turbulent 2020s, and the interconnectedness of the world is glaringly obvious. It matters who is or is not elected in neighbouring countries. It matters what wars are being waged, and which children are suffering, in other countries. It matters what pollutants are being released into our air, soil and water. The idea that any one of us can be saved while the world burns and children suffer is non-

sensical.

I don't pretend to have a perfect theory of atonement. But I have always been helped by remembering that the word "atonement" is "at-one-ment." I believe we will only be saved when all of humanity lives "at-one" with one another and with all of creation.

In April, Catherine Keller will be at the cathedral for this year's John Albert Hall lectures. I hope you can join us for that event, either in person or by livestream. Catherine is a remarkable theologian and has much to offer us.

In March, the diocesan book study group read Catherine's book *No Matter What: Crisis and the Spirit of Planetary Possibility*. In one of the chapters they looked at to prepare for her visit, "Creeps of the Apocalypse: Climate, Capital, Democracy," she talks about how, in this day and age, perhaps salvation is going to have to have an element of "salvage" to it. If we are going to live as saved people in a broken world perhaps what this looks like is being able to, as Catherine writes, "salvage scraps of potentiality from inadequate gestures, well-intended compromises, unpracticed theories, broken promises."

As we move through Holy Week and Easter 2025 here in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets, may we be people of hope, people who try, as best we can, to live at one with all people, and all of creation. Amidst the brokenness of the world, may we work to salvage all that is good, all that is loving, trusting that even when the empires of the world wage violence and death, God resurrects.

Making transgender history visible



Photo by [Karollyne Videira Hubert](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Naomi Racz*

March 31 marks International Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV). The event was founded in 2009 by transgender activist Rachel Crandall Crocker, with the intention of providing a day to celebrate the transgender community.

While the day has received some criticism and Crocker herself has talked about the dangers of visibility, at a time when the word "transgender" is being removed from US government websites and laws are being enacted in Canada and other countries to block transgender youth from accessing health care, TDOV seems more important than ever.

While Transgender Day of Visibility is a chance to celebrate the transgender community, the day also demands visibility from allies. In January, Bishop Mariann Budde, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, DC, delivered a sermon during a service

at the National Cathedral attended by President Trump. In her sermon, Bishop Budde pleaded directly with the president.

“In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now. There are gay, lesbian and transgender children in Democratic, Republican and independent families, some who fear for their lives.” Bishop Budde also called for mercy for undocumented immigrants. This is true allyship in action.

While Trump and his supporters have been vocal proponents of stripping transgender people of their basic rights, there are surely many more allies and potential allies out there than haters.

Given that approximately 0.3% of the population of Canada identifies as transgender or non-binary, transgender people make up a small percentage of the population. For many people, gender identity isn't something they have ever had to grapple with, and they may not have knowingly met a transgender person. In this vacuum, people's understanding of what it means to be transgender has been shaped by growing media attention. And not all of it positive. Hence why visibility is not *necessarily* a good thing.

A term that has appeared in recent years is “transtrender.” GLAAD defines it as the “misguided and false trope... that trans and/or non-binary people are not *really* trans but are merely following modern ‘trends’ of gender exploration for social or online capital.”

But as many transgender people have been stating in response to increasing transphobia and anti-trans legislation: “We have always existed, and we always

will.”

There is now a growing corpus of books on transgender history. Two that I've found to be a useful introduction to the topic are *Before We Were Trans: A History of Gender* by Kit Heyam and *Transgender History* by Susan Stryker.

In *Before We Were Trans* Heyam advocates for a broader interpretation of what can be included in transgender history. Whereas the academic field of history has typically taken a “cisgender until proven otherwise” approach to historical figures who disrupted gender norms, Heyam argues that contemporary Western understanding of sex, gender and gender roles doesn't always map on to the past or other cultures.

Using this lens, Heyam's book has chapters on gender roles in West Africa, fashion in early modern Europe, cross-dressing and transgender women in First World War internment camps, intersex people in early colonial America, and gender and spirituality in North America and South Asia.

Transgender History, meanwhile, focuses on the US from the mid-twentieth century up until 2016. One interesting aspect of the book is the way Stryker connects transgender history and advancements in transgender civil rights to larger historic and social trends, such as second wave feminism, the fall of the Soviet Union and increased government surveillance post 9/11. Being transgender is nothing new, and transgender history has always been intimately woven into broader historic events.

The final chapter of the second edition, published in 2017, focuses on some of the gains in transgender

rights during the Obama presidency and the losses in the early days of Trump's first presidency. It is a poignant read given the current attacks on transgender rights in the first few days and months of Trump's second term in office.

Seemingly speaking to the importance of visibility and celebrating trans lives, Stryker writes in her book:

“When trans and gender-nonconforming lives are lived joyously and unapologetically in plain sight and their hard truths and dangers are spoken out loud, when the knowledge that comes from living those lives is channeled into music and dance, written about and written from, played with and fantasized over, when their beauty and weirdness, their sharp edges and dark recesses are creatively explored and collectively experienced, that is equally as important as heavy political activism.”

This is by no means an exhaustive reading list and there are many more books and websites out there that allies can read to educate themselves. The University of Victoria, for example, is home to [the largest transgender archive in the world](#).

While Budde literally [wrote the book on bravery](#), anyone can begin today to find small ways to inform themselves about transgender lives and history. Whether that's reading a book or reminding oneself of the lessons in mercy and loving kindness that Jesus taught.

2025 primatial election to be more transparent and inclusive



Archbishop Linda Nicholls (left), former primate of the Anglican Church of Canada retired on September 15, 2024. Archbishop Anne Germond (right), metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario, is acting primate. Photo © George Cribbs; Michael Hudson/Anglican Church of Canada.

By Ian Alexander

We Anglicans have funny names for a lot of things. For instance, we call our presiding bishop “the primate,” and we call the primate’s elected right-hand person “the prolocutor.” That’s the position I currently have the honour of holding — though I sometimes have trouble pronouncing it!

One of the most important things the approximately 300 delegates to the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada will do when they meet at London,

Ontario in the last week of June is elect a new primate for our church. The former primate, Linda Nicholls, reached mandatory retirement age last fall; since then, we've been led by an acting primate, Anne Germond, who is also bishop of Algoma and metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario.

The primate is not “the boss of all the bishops.” But the primate is the bishops’ convenor and pastor, and “first among equals” with the other archbishops. The primate is also, under our constitution, the president and CEO of the General Synod, chair of the Council of General Synod, and an *ex officio* member of all national church committees, councils, boards and commissions.

The primate exercises pastoral and spiritual leadership throughout the Anglican Church of Canada, regularly visits every diocese across the country, speaks prophetically to the church and the world about matters of faith and social justice, and represents the Anglican Church of Canada ecumenically and internationally.

Our next primate will be elected by a majority of the members of the Order of Clergy and the Order of Laity at the General Synod. One of my last duties as prolocutor will be to preside over that election.

But the process of the primatial election is beginning right now, as this edition of *Faith Tides* is being published. This week, the Order of Bishops is meeting at Mount Carmel Monastery in Niagara Falls, to discern three to five of their number as nominees for primate.

Those names will be announced on Thursday, April 3, on a special web page created to share [information about the primatial election](#). About a week after that,

by Friday, April 11, biographical and other written information about the nominees will be posted, and later in April (likely by April 22), nominees’ video responses to questions will be added.

This is considerably more background on primatial nominees than has ever been provided before, intended to create a more open, transparent and inclusive electoral process for all Canadian Anglicans. You're encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity. You can start now, by visiting [the web page](#) and watching the two short videos already posted there, about the primacy and the election.

Other tabs on the same web site will carry other important information about the business of General Synod, including the agenda, reports and resolutions. Check back often to stay up to date about the business of your national church. And please pray for the delegates to General Synod — including the eight of us from the Diocese of Islands and Inlets.

Christ Church, Alert Bay awarded AFC grant



Christ Church, Alert Bay. The white picket fence seen in this photo has since been removed. Image © Sheila Cook.

By Naomi Racz

Christ Church, Alert Bay (‘Yalis) on Cormorant Island has been awarded a category C grant of \$50,000 by the Anglican Foundation of Canada.



The stained glass windows on the east wall of Christ Church. Image © Sheila Cook.

Christ Church sits on the unceded ancestral Land of the ‘Namgis Nation, and from 1925 to 1974, the diocese ran St Michael’s Indian Residential School in Alert Bay.

Sheila Cook is the incumbent at Christ Church and the first Indigenous woman ordained in our diocese.

“It is a beloved church to the local Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, built by the people,” says Sheila. “A colonial project, as all churches built on these good Lands are, Christ Church is also a painful reminder of the intergenerational trauma that lives and breathes here in Alert Bay, location of the former Anglican-run St. Michael’s Residential School. Some of our people cannot even walk into the church because of the pain it holds for them.”

The repairs to the church building will create a revitalized space that acknowledges the church’s history, fosters healing and reconciliation and fulfills its ongoing commitment to the local community.

As Bishop Anna states in her letter of support for the grant, “The relationship of the physical buildings... and the ministry that takes place in the community is inseparable. The building and its state of repair is a physical representation of our commitment to the community and our responsibilities and obligations.”

As well as the repairs to the east wall, other repairs and upgrades will be made to all three of the church’s buildings. St George’s chapel and a rectory are also located on the site. Molly Willie, a Christ Church parishioner, with WheLaLaU Society and Indigenous Justice Association BC, leases the rectory for youth, family and Elder programming. These additional works will include upgrading the perimeter drainage, repairs to walkways and ramps, and replacing older fluorescent lights with more energy efficient lighting.

The repair works will begin this spring.

Anglican teen organizes environmental expo



Surfrider Foundation Canada was one of the organizations that took part in the environmental expo. Image © Taylor Gossman

By Naomi Racz

On Saturday, January 11, 2025, Church of the Advent, Colwood hosted an environmental expo. But the idea for the event started life in the brain of Anglican youth and Church of the Advent member Taylor Gossman. Taylor is a senior in high school and a passionate environmentalist. She plans to go into environmental science for her post-secondary education and hopes to one day make a career out of it.

“I’ve always been interested in the environment,” says Taylor. “It’s something I’m very passionate about, and I think [the expo] really stemmed from me wanting to do something. I’m a teenager and there’s not a lot I can do. But I knew that using the church would be a really good way to do something impactful in my community.”

The environmental expo featured 15 local organizations with a focus on environmental sustainability, such as the Gorge Waterway Action Society, the Urban Food Resilience Initiative Society, the Victoria Natural History Society and the Friends of Havenwood Park, as well as a number of local farms. Each organization hosted a table, and attendees could talk with leaders and volunteers to learn more about achievable actions they can take to help the environment.

There were also presentations from speakers including Calvin Sandborn, a parishioner in our diocese and former director of the University of Victoria’s Environmental Law Centre, and Carol Bruce, chair of the Citizens Environment Network in Colwood.

AFC grants to strengthen collaboration between Anglican churches and community partners

Taylor single-handedly organized the event, including marketing it. She put up posters around the community, as well as posting about the expo on the church website and Facebook groups. Ingrid Anderson, the incumbent at Church of the Advent, also lent a hand by mentioning the event at services and encouraging parishioners to spread the word.

Although Taylor feels marketing isn't her strong suit, her efforts clearly paid off as the event attracted over 150 people. Attendees were a mix of members of the church and the local community. There were also several teens and children there throughout the day.

Many who took part mentioned to Taylor that they were excited to attend the event again next year. Taylor enjoyed the experience and would be keen to organize a similar event in the future — although she would like to rope in a few other passionate environmentalists to help organize it! She also feels that the event achieved its goal.

“I think the biggest thing with the environment, and environment anxiety, is the fact that people really don't know how they can get involved and how they can help the environment in their own community. So, giving people this opportunity to donate or to volunteer their time or to just learn about what's happening and things they can do, I think was really impactful.”



Image courtesy of Anglican Foundation Canada.

By Michelle Hauser

The Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) is calling on Canadian Anglicans to strengthen community connections and expand ministry partnerships through its 2025 request for proposals for community ministry partnerships.

The AFC board of directors has approved \$50,000 in funding, with grants available for both local and regional projects that foster collaboration between Anglican organizations and external community partners.

“Anglicans across Canada are building meaningful partnerships that extend their ministry beyond church walls,” says Scott Brubacher, executive director of AFC. “By working alongside not-for-profit organizations, schools, small businesses and other faith groups, Anglican churches and ministries can multiply their impact, develop innovative solutions and strengthen communities.”

As in previous years, AFC will consider funding both new and existing projects that reflect a partnership approach to community engagement. Grants will be awarded in two categories:

- Category A – Local: Up to \$5,000 for projects that establish or meaningfully expand a partnership at the local level.
- Category B – Regional: Up to \$15,000 for projects that establish or meaningfully expand a partnership across a city, diocese or region.

Eligible funding uses include administrative expenses, travel, equipment, technical costs, remuneration, honoraria and food. Applications will be accepted from September 1 to October 1, 2025, with funding decisions announced in December 2025.

“AFC continues to prioritize partnerships as a powerful model for sustainable ministry,” says Brubacher. “This request for proposals is an opportunity for Anglican communities to deepen their outreach by collaborating

with like-minded organizations that share their mission and vision.”

For full eligibility criteria and application details, visit www.anglicanfoundation.org/apply/2025rfp or contact foundation@anglicanfoundation.org.

Softening the heart and mind



Photo by [NIKLAS LINIGER](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *John J. Thatamanil*

A letter from an American theologian to his Canadian church

Dear Canadian friends,

I am guessing that you are as dazed and confused as I am about how American politics could have become so quickly and easily corrupted. Explanations are not easy to come by, and neither are solutions. So much has to go wrong before an entire nation finds itself under authoritarian grip. It does not happen overnight. The

rot starts early.

First, there must be a malignancy present in a nation right at its inception. The US's unwillingness to grapple with its genocidal violence against Indigenous Peoples, the Middle Passage and slavery constitutes the first mutation. With some historical exceptions, such as Reconstruction and the Black Freedom Movement, Americans have indulged in the myth of innocence and even nobility. In so doing, Americans have permitted white supremacy to metastasize uncontrolled. Without radical chemotherapy, this outcome was always inevitable.

Second, add in a media environment in which each of us receives only the information we already want to believe (no disturbing fact need be seen). Then permit a few crucial actors, state and nonstate, to be in control of that media environment (Mr. Musk), and let them pump misinformation to large segments of the population. This trend has accelerated rightwing politics globally. If this emphasis on social media and its pernicious effects seems exaggerated, consider this 2018 finding from researchers at MIT, [summarized below in the journal *Science*](#):

“Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends or financial information.... It took the truth about six times as long as falsehood to reach 1,500 people.”

But the iron grip of falsehood requires a third more insidious spiritual malformation: a well-oiled cultural program that works to corrode the heart. For decades, talk radio has spewed hatred, cultivated toxic

masculinity, persuaded us (men in particular) that vulnerability is weakness and brewed resentment against Black and brown folks, LGBTQ folks and immigrants. It was all but inevitable that Americans would find themselves in the hands of a White Supremacist in Chief.

One hard lesson that Canadians must receive from US political life is that the wounds of the past must not be left unaddressed. Left untreated, they have the power to corrupt Canadian political life as well. As a relative newbie to Canada, I have already heard a certain unfortunate weariness about “our constant talk about Indigenous reconciliation.” American politics offers a terrifying lesson about the risks that come without the long work of deep repair.

No nation, not even one with venerable democratic institutions, is exempt from authoritarianism if its own legacy of supremacy (white supremacy in North America, caste supremacy in India, etc.) is not eliminated, root and branch.

If the road here was long, the way out will be at least as long. Americans will have to fight urgent frontline battles now, but the long war must be fought over the terrain of the human heart. Only a well-tuned and open heart can serve as a reliable moral compass.

Healing the heart is our only hope, in both the US and Canada. This, of course, must be the work of every spiritual community, the long game in these desperate times. The good news is that no power on earth can prevent us from doing this holy work. Starting now.

We Anglicans have our wits about us. We can read the distressing signs of undemocratic times and have no intention of collaborating with naked authoritarianism.

That much we know. What we do not know is what action to take. What is the next right step to take, not just as a political intervention, but as an institution rooted and grounded in the way of Jesus?

My siblings, our work in this and every time is to soften the heart. When we let the heart harden and calcify, we lose our way. The mind is easily led astray.

But, now, I want to complicate matters. To be clear, there is no such thing as mind separated from heart. A variety of religious traditions, including the deep past of Christianity, would not have divorced mind from heart. Or, if such a split was sensed, the work of spirituality was to return the mind to the heart. Hence, Eastern Orthodox monastics routinely spoke of “dropping the mind into the heart.” Moreover, there are entire languages, cultures and traditions in which one word is used to refer to both at once; for example, the Chinese use a single word for heart-mind (*xin*).

If this restored synthesis of mind and heart is the sought-after goal, we must recognize that we have lived since the Enlightenment with a compromised imagination, one in which thinking is opposed to feeling, and mind contrasted with heart. We have learned to prize tough-minded rationality as opposed to tender-hearted sentimentality.

The trouble is an “unfeeling rationality” is *always* an exercise in self-delusion. Why? Because neuroscientists have come to the conclusion that every part of the brain thinks and feels simultaneously. Thinking is driven and deepened (and corrupted) by passion. Everything hinges on which passions are at work.

Good thinking is driven by a desire for truth and a courageous openness to the real. By contrast, thinking

that goes wrong is compromised by egoism, racist passion or sexist impulses. What feels like neutral or clear-minded thinking is often anything but.

These discoveries offer indispensable information for the church. Care of the heart-mind through spiritual discipline has always been part of our core work, even if we have often lost sight of this mission or confined it to monastics. As a church, we must recover these ancient practices of purifying and tuning the heart so that an uncorrupted heart can feel-think truly. This task is now a central calling of our age.

My friends, I have every confidence that we can and must do this urgent work if our political life is to be redeemed from its current degraded state. Joining with other spiritual communities, we must heal the heart if the body politic is to be purified of the spiritual toxins that now compromise our common life.

In transnational spiritual solidarity,
John

Lent, gender and revelation



Tapestry depicting a seascape to represent the turbulence and starkness of Lent. The tapestry is displayed at St Philip's by-the-Sea, Lantzville and was created by local artist Coreen Zerr. Photo by Les Smith.

By Juli Mallett

Confession, and Lent in its penitential character, is not about adding guilt or punishment to our suffering, but the removal of shame. We are liberated from the oppression of things done and left undone when we are able to face them plainly, and to accept reality as it is, rather than as we wish it could be.

We may fear that only bad people do the kinds of things we have done, and therefore we are bad people. If we can move beyond fear, we discover the truth of the difficulties of our lives, and of those whom we might judge. We are invited to live in a world where good people must work to be mindful of the harm we do, rather than one in which we can pretend such harm is impossible.

We hold on to our images of who we are, who God is, and what the world should be like, at times with an almost (or actually) anxious sense of certainty. We know who we are, however, not by mere inward belief, but by entering into relationship. As children, our personalities are formed by how others see us, and how we wish we were seen (and how we fear we are seen).

Our sense of self is also shaped by our theological imagination. In Christ we see the ultimate example of what a human life should be. And we see what calls to us in his life, and the lives of the many saints who make up the body of Christ. Relationships with loved ones and strangers across our lifespan, including our animal companions and all the wonders of creation, tell us who we are and who we might become.

We are not empty vessels who absorb these images passively. We are called to take account of and responsibility for what we have already done, and who we have already been, but not to limit ourselves. More often than not, we are already on the path to becoming the person we wish we were; over time, we grow to be like those we admire.

The images we carry with us and inhabit as we go out into the world affect those around us, the quality of our relationships and what the mirror of the world reflects back to us. Back and forth, our inner hopes and feelings and our outer interactions with all that exists, including God, are mutually transforming.

We can think theologically about how we know things in terms of “general revelation” and “special revelation.” The general is that which is accessible to everyone. It is the things we can see and directly encounter in the natural world. It is insights arrived at through the application of thought.

The special is that which is more directly conveyed, in one way or another, from the holy. This latter kind of revelation may come to a specific person, or through a specific means, rather than being generally accessible. We might think of prophecy, visions and any sort of private or supernatural experience of God as being forms of special revelation. We can also think in terms of general and special revelation in what we know of other people and ourselves.

What the world thinks it knows about us is largely down to general revelation: what they think they know about us from what they can see and what they can experience. Inside of us all, however, there is an inaccessible inner chamber, where the soul seems to find fit to dwell, where we experience the actual felt

quality of our life and person. It is the place where we find ourselves in contact with God most deeply. We cannot readily move things from one realm into the other. At best, we can perhaps carry some images back and forth: who we are, who we might become.

In our hearts, we know that the world is wrong about us, and there are times when what the world reflects to us is a deeply hurtful ugliness. We come to know rejection and shame and the worst kinds of fear when our relationships tell us that we are fundamentally unacceptable, and that our lives have no value except as a vessel for others. This happens when someone else tells us how we ought to live and who they imagine we really are.

This Lent, so many of us are deeply disturbed by the rise in government persecution of trans people around the world. In the United Kingdom and the United States, and even in parts of Canada, new obstacles to the safety and well-being of trans people, and particularly trans youth, are emerging rapidly and being codified into law. It is worth taking some time to reflect theologically on gender as a site of revelation.

Like every aspect of identity, gender is always a matter of provisional knowledge, and like every category is somewhat unsound in its apparent concreteness. The experience and expression of gender changes across the lifespan and across different contexts.

A mother and a manager may be the same person but be expressed to others in completely different ways. Young children, teenagers, those who are building a household and those who are in retirement express and experience their sense of themselves, and their gender, quite differently. Gender expression in informal settings and formal settings can be very different for

the same person.

To be a person is not to belong to fixed categories: good person, bad person; boy, girl or something else. Who we are is expressed, seen and felt differently across our lives and in different situations. In Lent, we are called to hold categories rather more lightly, and to allow ourselves to be surprised by the world as it really is, including who we are.

We are certainly not so wretched as we often feel, and we are not so innocent as we might sometimes like to project. We do not know others as well as they know themselves, but we might be an example to them as they seek to build themselves into the full stature of Christ. What we know and wish for in ourselves, in the inner sanctum of our being, is a special revelation from God that is to be treasured and shared.

Let us use the experience of Lent as a time to confess to ourselves and one another, not just with words but with our lives, who we really are, and what God has made known in our lives.

Where are we on our exodus journey?



[Sunol Regional Wilderness - Sunol, Ca](#) © Shelby L. Bell, [CC BY 2.0](#)

By Sandy Cotton

Christians ought to be really good at any venture involving change and transformation. Throughout every year, we explore the great transforming narratives of our faith tradition. When it comes to leading change, we are given privileged and reverential access to profound role models. We are fundamentally, and irrevocably, people who are called by God to get on with the process of changing ourselves, our communities and our world. In fact, the best metaphor for our collective life is the journey as disciples of Jesus.

Few of us realize that all those fancy, sophisticated and expensive ideas used by “change management” consultants are thinly-disguised variations on the exodus theme. Change involves moving from one place or situation toward something that is more desirable according to whatever criteria are important to us. In

order to get to *there*, we have to let go of *here*, and on the way, we have to pass through some sort of neutral zone. It’s the timeless biblical sequence of Egypt, wilderness and promised land. And Moses is the enduring icon when it comes to change leadership, with Jethro as the first management consultant.

But I’m not so sure we Christians, and especially we Anglicans, are adept at getting past the talking stage when it comes to change. God seems to incline our hearts toward hardening of the categories when it comes to models of church life, rather than inspiring us to act. We are skilled at talking about the promised land, but unable to pack our bags for the journey into the wilderness. There is a Spanish proverb for such tendencies: “It is one thing to talk of bulls; another thing to be in the bullring.” When it comes to the bullring of change, we tend to prefer talking.

In my work with faith communities and their leaders, I encourage them to name (through dialogue, biblical reflection and simple checklists) where they are, individually and collectively, on what I call the Exodus Journey Scale. Basically, it’s a continuum that starts with Egypt, moves across the wilderness and ends in the promised land. Conversations about such matters are fundamental to any collaborative approach to change within a faith community.

Over the years, I have come to understand that most congregations find it easiest to place themselves in the wilderness. In fact, the majority do it rather quickly. Everyone recognizes that the church (regardless of denomination) is not what it used to be, but the future seems shrouded in fog. They can relate to many of the typical symptoms of this intermediate stage in the change process: mixed emotions, longing for the good old days, uncertainty about future directions and tired

leadership. And it's comforting for the community and affirming for its leadership to declare that change is happening. That we are on our way forward!

Yet I am also coming to understand, in complex and multi-layered ways, that there just might be elements of self-deception and false bravado at play in the choice of the wilderness as "where we are now." Perhaps we're still struggling in Egypt, more content to live with plagues, pestilence, squabbles and hardened hearts, than pack our bags for the journey.

Leaving Egypt proved to be a terrifying prospect for the Israelites, and I think it's much the same for us. Things have to get really bad before we decide that moving is the better option. And even then, there are elements of the "old ways" of being and doing that we have trouble leaving behind. (Carrying bricks, mortar and wooden pews can be quite a burden in the wilderness, never mind our doctrinal and liturgical squabbles.) Change is never easy and always messy.

There are no easy answers when it comes to thinking about how the exodus story relates to our current church life. Where are you and your faith community now? Certainly, I am a long way from knowing exactly where we are on the Exodus Journey Scale. All I do know is that we must engage in honest and respectful dialogue about the growing need to leave Egypt behind. And that no matter what happens, God will be with us as we move forward.

This article was originally published in Dialogue, the newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Ontario.

Decolonizing Christian art



St John's Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Minnesota was designed by modernist architect Marcel Breuer. [Saint John's Abbey Church in St. Joseph, Minnesota](#) © Lorie Shaull, [CC BY 2.0](#)

By Jessica Ziakin Cook

In October 2024, and with the financial support of the [Diocese's Educational Trust Board](#), I attended the Universities Art Association of Canada (UAAC) conference at Western University in London, ON. I traveled with two professors and three graduate student colleagues from the department of art history and visual studies at the University of Victoria (UVic), where I am a PhD student.

The conference was my first national conference as an art historian, and I got to meet some of the scholars that inspire my writing and thought. I was starstruck, for instance, to meet Carla Taunton, whose chapter (with Leah Decter) on embodying decolonial methodology in [Unsettling Canadian Art History](#) has been a guiding light for me (you can see my review of it

[here](#)).

Carla's work introduced me to how I might, as a white settler Christian art historian, serve as an accomplice in decolonizing the GLAM sector. (GLAM, I learned, stands for Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums — pretty sexy for us nerds!) As a Jewish feminist scholar, Carla writes sensitively about how settlers can practice treaty in cultural work, which I'd say includes those doing church work!

Art history, you see, like the church, is deeply tied up with colonialism. But Indigenous and Canadian art historians are working to change this. During a wine-and-cheese reception, I witnessed two more esteemed art historians, who I had only met "on the page" until that evening, receive awards for lifetime achievement and contributions to (dare I say it?) diversity, equity and inclusion.

Charmaine Nelson, the lifetime achievement award recipient, was the first Black woman to hold a tenured position in art history in Canada. She is celebrated for her work on unearthing the visual culture of [Canada's 200+ years-long slave-owning period](#).

Heather Igloliorte, [an Inuk-Newfoundlander and Nunatsiavut art historian, artist and curator](#), was recently appointed to the University of Victoria's faculty of visual arts and has made major contributions to the fields of Indigenous and Canadian art history. She has led the way in centring [Indigenous art, curatorship and meaning in the field of North American art history](#). It was an honor to meet these scholarly leaders that work to promote an ethic of deep care and collegiality in our little corner of academia.

I was presenting on a panel on 20th century ecclesial

(church) art. My paper, entitled "Perplexing Juxtapositions: Brutalism in the Monastic Arts in Cascadia," looked at a surprising trend in North American Benedictine monasteries of combining Medieval-style art with concrete, Modernist architecture. I focused on how one might look at church furnishings and architecture with a decolonial lens. I presented a model in which the art and artist are considered alongside the land on which the artworks might be found, and its colonial history.

I felt I took a risk in advocating for the use of the practice of examen as my scholarly model. Examen is an Ignatian spiritual practice of reflection in which one asks of their day, where am I experiencing abundance? And where is there desolation? As my spiritual directors have taught me, this practice expands one's capacity to hold the celebration of accomplishment and the need for growth together — to honour blessings received and disappointed hopes as *both* true.

I was nervous presenting this idea because it would amount to outing myself as a practicing Christian in a highly secular academy, while advocating for a greater commitment to Truth and Reconciliation for my field of Christianity and the arts — two objectives that those with a narrow view of Christianity might assume are mutually exclusive. What I discovered at the conference, however, was a general enthusiasm towards explorations of art and spirituality.

Overall, my experience at the conference was one of being with a group of people who are deeply committed to telling and understanding stories across cultural differences; who advocate for the value of history and community; and who have committed their lives to studying human creativity. This vibrant group of people are working to shed light on visions of

human flourishing in which connection and responsibility to one another are right at the centre of our art, our studies and all of our relationships.

Letter to the editor (March & April 2025)



By Faith Tides

Dear Editor,

Bravo to Kieran Wilson for his well-researched and excellently written article on Bishop George Hills' resolute opposition to racial segregation in Anglican churches in BC in the 19th century ([Bishop George Hills and Anglican opposition to segregation in early Victoria](#)). This story recounts one of the better instances of episcopal leadership in our province and beyond.

During our tortuous debates in recent years on the full inclusion of LGBTQ Christians in the ceremonies and sacraments of the church, I had numerous occasions to speak to the national House of Bishops about Bishop Hills' shining example of courage in the face of prejudice.

His comment to the Black former slaves that he would not himself belong to any organization that excluded them is a searing testament to the priority of gospel over popular opinion. It should be engraved on the walls of our churches.

Hills stood against the public mood in Victoria on this matter, and it had a direct bearing on his historic dispute with Dean Edward Cridge, whose supporters chased the bishop around the diocese when he tried to visit his parishes. The effects of that dispute have deeply shaped Anglicanism in this province and remain with us still.

Hills was not ahead of his time in everything, of course. His opinion of Roman Catholics is a bit shocking to modern sensibilities. He could hardly be called an ecumenist. And his attitude to First Nations might charitably be described as benevolent paternalism.

Despite this, Hills was a leader about whom Anglicans should know more. Thanks to Kieran for re-introducing him to us.

Michael Ingham
8th Bishop of New Westminster (retired)
Qualicum Beach, BC
