



# DIOCESAN POST

Celebrating the Diocese of British Columbia

A Section of the ANGLICAN JOURNAL

MAY 2020

## Coronavirus challenges churches

BY SUSAN DOWN

Scant weeks ago, when a report of a new virus was only one item on the newscast, the danger seemed so far away. But since January 2020, our lives have changed dramatically. Consider the intensive timeline. On Jan. 21, 2020, BC's Health Minister Adrian Dix and Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer, issued the first of their joint statements: they were carefully monitoring a new respiratory illness linked to a coronavirus. Then on Jan. 28, BC became the second province to confirm a case of COVID-19.

As the impact grew more alarming and images of makeshift hospitals in Europe and the US were prominent, the crisis took on wartime precedence, wiping all the other current events off the front pages and TV screens. On March 11, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, attitudes shifted.

On that same day, Premier John Horgan, Dix, and Dr. Henry talked to faith groups by phone, urging them to practice social distancing. Only days later, as the situation escalated, Bishop Logan declared on March 16 that all churches must close for 60 days. No services, no meetings, no food service. The cathedral would close completely on March 23.

On March 17, BC declared a health emergency, closing bars, restaurants, schools. Snowbirds and other travelers scrambled to find flights home and cut short their holidays as the prime minister mused about closing borders.

When this was written (April 4) there were more than 1,200 cases in the province. By the time you read it, the situation will have shifted again as we attempt protect ourselves and others. In the meantime, previously unknown terms such as "social distancing" and "flattening the



A young parishioner watches an online sermon by Dawna Wall, rector of St. Michael and All Angels. Many churches in the diocese have taken up the challenge of reaching out by video, livestreaming and Zoom.

curve" have become familiar in everyone's conversation.

What does this mean for the church communities? As you will read in this issue, many churches are finding new ways to continue their good works as well as present their rich and comforting services. Clergy have been taking turns reading and recording daily devotions. Many churches

are videoing or livestreaming services. Bishop Logan invited all parishes of the Anglican diocese of Island and Inlets to join together in ringing their church bells for five minutes to thank provincial leaders and all front-line workers for all that they are doing to keep our communities safe.

The Anglican community has responded with gestures

large and small, all the while reaching out to others to help the needy. In recent months, after projections suggested the Anglican Church membership may dwindle to nothing in the next 20 years, we fretted about what the future could be. Now the question of how we do church without churches is a much more

*Continued on page 3*

## Electoral Synod postponed

On March 26, Diocesan Council decided to defer the electoral synod that had been tentatively scheduled for Saturday, June 27 due to uncertainty about what social distancing guidelines will be in place at that time. An electronic virtual meeting, with over 200 electors casting secret ballots in two separate orders, presented logistical challenges that would have been difficult to meet in that short

time frame. Further, there was a feeling that a virtual meeting would limit the opportunity for full and careful consultation among delegates and might deprive some candidates of the opportunity to make themselves known fully to the electors.

Following the Bishop's retirement on May 1, Dean Ansley Tucker will assume the role of administrator, in accordance with the canons.

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# Five steps to a hands-on vision



## Dean's Corner

BY THE VERY REV'D  
ANSLEY TUCKER

Fresh starts and clean breaks: that's the way we like it, isn't it? We are people of ceremony and toasts, of ritual and words, and we like to mark our beginnings and endings clearly.

So, this is not the way we'd have planned to say farewell and thank you to Bishop Logan. It feels like a rather ragged ending, nudged up against an uncomfortably uncertain future.

Of course, when the coronavirus has run its course, we shall find all the appropriate ways we can to offer our gratitude and celebrate the accomplishments of our diocese during Bishop Logan's episcopacy. The party

plans will be dusted off and at least some aspects of the farewell tour resurrected!

In the meantime, reflecting on where we have been as a diocese, what we have learned, and what has changed is a good spiritual exercise. A diocese is a large and complex entity. To use an ancient Christian metaphor, it is like a ship. A ship cannot be turned on a dime. What you hope for is a sea change, forces of nature that come to your aid. I believe that during Bishop Logan's time we have been experiencing such a sea change.

Not least, is the growing sense that "the diocese" is the collective noun that refers to all of us – "we together," as we say. All by itself this has allowed us to be more aware of our neighbouring churches, their needs and contributions, and to function less as competitive franchises.

This sense of "we-ness" has helped create a widespread commitment to our diocesan vision. Defining our dreams and priorities, and then actually

managing to integrate that vision into our decision making, is a singular achievement. It's easy to say what's important to you: it's a lot harder to make it happen. Our current creativity in re-imagining church during this time of pandemic isolation is testimony to the power of a vision that gave us the word "re:" renewed hearts, renewed spirits, renewed people.

In this vein, Bishop Logan has brought two major themes into focus: reconciliation, and discipleship. Inspired by his leadership, and by our fumbling efforts to hear the pain of the other, we have become pilgrims on a journey of healing. Most obvious is the continuing development of meaningful and respectful relationships with indigenous peoples, but Bishop Logan has also brought the ministry of reconciliation to bear in healing fractured relationships of all kinds.

Our diocesan vision also emphasizes lay leadership and formation. The bishop's call for a season of intentional

discipleship has highlighted ways we can equip ourselves as Christians to engage in the practices of our faith, and to mend God's world. During Bishop Logan's time, reconciliation and discipleship have become a lens through which we see and assess our common life. That's a sea change!

So is the fact that many of us are beginning to see the raising of money differently. Our diocesan Transforming Futures initiative is principally about dreaming God's future: learning what is dear to God's heart and imagining how to make it so. Money is just one means of achieving those objectives. Bishop Logan has been adamant that Transforming Futures is about transforming

the future: not about raising money. Will the money come? It will, if the vision is authentic and captivating.

For five years now, from my perch in the cathedral deanery, which is right next door to the Synod offices, I have seen at close hand the competence and commitment of the team Bishop Logan has assembled. Our synod office staff and the officers of Synod, no less than our clergy and lay leaders throughout the diocese, are self-directed and knowledgeable. I have every confidence that we are in very good hands.

Thank you, Bishop Logan. ■

*M. Ansley Tucker is rector of Christ Church Cathedral and dean of Columbia.*

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### New Submission Deadlines

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June issue - April 25  
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# Medicine: your sacred duty



BY MITCHELL L. HAMMOND

## Christian approaches to epidemics in the 16th century

*In reflections adapted from his new book, Epidemics and the Modern World, historian Mitchell Hammond discusses the debate over medicine in the era of the Reformation and its implications for today.*

Christian approaches to epidemics were forged in early modern Europe, when outbreaks of plague and other diseases routinely threatened most large communities. Theologians stressed God's absolute power as a matter of doctrine. They sometimes invoked the image of *Christus medicus* (Christ as healer) that was a favoured theme for the ancient theologian St. Augustine (ca. 350-430). However, they also contended that human actions and medicine were not futile. Writers approvingly quoted a passage from Sirach, a book of ancient wisdom that was read alongside the Bible: "Honor the doctor for his service, for the Lord created him; his skill comes from the Most High, and he is rewarded by kings."

In the 16th century, an era of frequent epidemics as well as religious upheaval, Christian observers mostly agreed that people should either fight pestilence or avoid it by flight. Protestant leaders offered various approaches to crisis and suffering. In particular, the leading German

reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) left no doubt about his support of orthodox medicine. In December 1527, as a wave of plague approached his hometown of Wittenberg, Luther published a German tract entitled *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague* (*Ob man vor dem Sterben fliehen möge*) that was translated and reprinted numerous times. Luther acknowledged the impulse to flee but urged Christians to fulfill social obligations and care for their neighbours, adding that the use of medicine was a sacred duty. "He who does not use it [medicine] when he could do so without harming his neighbour injures his body, and must beware lest he be considered a suicide in God's eyes," said Luther. A generation later, Theodore de Bèze, a follower of John Calvin, also acknowledged the need to meet social obligations, although he stressed that Christians should flee whenever possible.

As divides deepened among religious factions, writers sought in different ways to reconcile the belief

in a sovereign, omnipotent God with human agency in the struggle against pestilence. Some observers, including Luther's Wittenberg contemporary Andreas Karlstadt, suggested that medicine was unnecessary for those who placed ultimate trust in God. But most Christian authorities, both Catholic and Protestant, saw no inherent contradiction. Catholic rituals invoked the power of saints to intercede on behalf of humanity. However, Catholic city-states such as Venice also took the lead in developing maritime quarantine measures and appointing municipal boards of health. Protestant leaders, who dismissed appeals to the saints, emphasized the goodness of the divinely created natural order. Their focus on responsible conduct by ordinary Christians encouraged many to look to earthly measures they could undertake in times of crisis.

Today, some secular observers – and some Christians, too – discern a tension between faith commitments and the

dictates of public health. We can recall that, in centuries past, Europe's Christians had diverse perspectives but usually viewed medicine and faith as complementary. During Toronto's outbreak of SARS in April 2003, Catholic Bishop John Boissoneau represented this tradition when he urged his community to observe medical directives. "Some people may feel a tension or stress between what they regard as their religious duty and their public health duty. Let me tell you, their public health duty is their religious duty," he said. As a new disease related to SARS circles the globe, a Christian response may reinforce the unity against this threat that we so desperately need. ■

*Mitchell Hammond is an assistant professor in the history department at the University of Victoria and an M.A.R. graduate of Yale Divinity School (1993). His book Epidemics and the Modern World was published by the University of Toronto Press in January. He is a member of St. Philip, Oak Bay.*

# Reaching beyond church walls

BY TONY REYNOLDS

Across the forests and the inlets of the North Island, telephones were ringing, cellphones and tablets were recording and individuals were packing foods and other essentials for a widely scattered community of Anglicans and their neighbours.

In Port Hardy, parishioners at St. Columba continue their Loaves and Fishes ministry supplying nutrition twice a month to those in the community in need. They form part of a community-wide network to maintain phone connections with the elderly while Fran Wallas, from their Indigenous ministry, is particularly conscientious about keeping lines of communication open.

People are turning to their screens – cellphones, TVs and computers – to download morning prayers, Compline, Sunday liturgies, the lighting of online virtual prayer candles via Facebook and parish webpages. In addition to these services, St. Peter in Comox set up Stations of the Cross in the gardens around the church to film Sulin Milne (rector) walking the stations with prayers and readings. St. Saviour on Denman Island uses the meeting software Zoom to

continue its weekly fellowship group.

At St. John the Divine in Courtenay, a "telecare" team has been set up to call all parishioners once a week along with a "how can we help" team to shop or provide other forms of assistance where needed. A "blessing box," once used as a street-side library is filled daily with packaged and canned food and they have increased the funds and are packing lunches to go for the Sunshine Lunch Club in place of the usual sit-down meals in the neighbouring United church.

Trinity Anglican + Lutheran Church in Port Alberni was not able to offer Trinity's annual Easter Monday dinner that feeds up to 140 guests, so they looked for other ways to provide food to those who need it most. They held a food drive with Trinity members leaving nonperishables in a bag at their doors for drivers to pick up in their neighbourhoods. The Captain of the local Salvation Army, host of the food bank and the Bread of Life daily meal service, was delighted to hear the church was donating the food to them.

People seem to be using their phones to share friendship, solace and assistance to those who are alone or vulnerable or are even just

friends who relish the chance for human connection over the phone lines or through cyberspace. At St. John Gualbert in Port McNeill, people are being called once a day and those wishing access to their excellent used bookstore can call ahead, gain entrance on their own, choose the books they want on the honour system and close the locking door as they leave. The church has become the community hub for ensuring all seniors and those with disabilities have their basic needs met, offering gift cards to the local grocery store and arranging for delivery and pick up for those in isolation. A large list of people is called at least twice a week to keep their social interaction intact. The Zoom platform is used to allow the church board, the Lent study group, and the choir to continue to meet. They said it has been fun to think outside the box to keep things going.

We may be confined in these weeks to private space and the personal company of a few, but the imagination and time church people are prepared to invest in their neighbours in these largely rural communities in the North Island is extensive.

And in a manner that is fully comprehensible, this also gives great meaning to their lives. ■

## Coronavirus challenges churches

*Continued from cover*

immediate problem. As you'll see on page 4, there are many creative ways to accomplish that. We have been resolute in helping each other, whether it means picking up groceries or making phone calls.

For the Anglican Diocese of BC, the crisis has meant the postponement of the episcopal election, and the cancellation of major events such as the organ festival.

This is unlike any other type of disaster, said Executive Archdeacon Barry Foster, who recalls people lining up for hours for shots during the H1N1 crisis in 2009 when he lived in Calgary. "The thing that's different now is the speed of information, the attention of the media outlets and the more generalized anxiety."

The financial impact of the pandemic on local churches is difficult to gauge at this point. But Foster sees the positive. During the 2008 recession,

he says, "Lots of churches said we're going belly up." But in Calgary, he noticed that the diocesan income didn't change at all. His conclusion was that when people made adjustments to their household budgets, they didn't change their support for the church.

Will this situation accelerate the decline of the Anglican Church? "It is not going to result in the collapse of the church, but it will impact it," said Foster. "We may lose some members, but what we don't know is whether others may say 'I want to seek them out.' " He recommends that churches remind members of the work they continue to do.

It is difficult to predict how society will look this summer, or indeed by the time you read this. When will we revive church suppers, picnics and book sales, not to mention sharing the Peace during services? Have confidence. As Queen Elizabeth II said, echoing World War II crooner Vera Lynn, in her rare address on Palm Sunday, "we'll meet again." ■

*Susan Down is editor of the Diocesan Post.*



# Chaplains in a dangerous time

BY SUSAN DOWN

As clergy members attached to secular institutions, chaplains play a holistic spiritual role in the work world that can encompass more listening than liturgy. Here are three Vancouver Island chaplains working in a prison, a university and a hospital. They have all been affected by the changes in daily routine brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and they continue to reshape their pastoral contributions accordingly.

**Kevin Arndt**

The current health crisis causes anxiety for many people, and it really ramps up the distress among prison inmates. At Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC)

in Victoria, the routine has been altered with no visitors or workers other than employees permitted at the present time. “Be not afraid’ is a message guys incarcerated need to hear at all times,” said VIRCC Chaplain Kevin Arndt. “There is lots of fear and tempers are short, so the pastoral element is that much more important.”

Arndt, who is also associate priest at St. John the Divine, Victoria, said his role at the prison is more of a counselor than a priest. He said his conversations are “less about God and more about where they are now emotionally and existentially.” Inmates confide in him as someone who is accepting and safe and who can offer unconditional assurance. The demand for one-on-one conversations with him has

skyrocketed due to worries that children or parents could be in danger and they aren’t there to assist. “There is a feeling of helplessness,” said Arndt. “They have a hard time forgiving themselves anyway, and when something like this happens, it brings it all to the surface. They can’t be with the people they love right now and the normal ways they can keep in touch are limited.”

**Peter Shurvin**

Peter Shurvin is a spiritual health practitioner at the Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria in addition to his role as an honorary priest at St. Barnabas. At the hospital, normally he would be found talking to patients and family members. “I offer a listening ear and offer sympathy, allay fears and try

to encourage them to stop and celebrate, to balance the horror with beauty, wonder and joy,” he said. But during the COVID-19 situation, he is not permitted to visit patients. Instead, he is using his skills to soothe front-line health care staff. Recently, he was approached by a local doctor who had worked in Toronto during the SARS outbreak. She remembered how comforting it was to listen to a devotion during the day. So Shurvin has started creating very short texts from a range of sources (singer songwriter Bruce Cockburn is one) to offer inspiration. He and his fellow spiritual health colleagues throughout the Island are doing their best to respond to the needs of staff in this critical time.

**Ruth Dantzer**

The COVID-19 slowdown came at a time when Ruth Dantzer, Anglican chaplain at the University of Victoria,

would have seen her workload change with the end of the school year. For one thing, her planned spring pilgrimage with students to Israel was cancelled. There are not as many hours of programming everything from suppers and small gatherings to innovative multifaith offerings such as Laughter Meditation and the Pet Café. Instead she said there is usually more one-on-one spiritual interaction, now done online rather than meeting face-to-face. “For students, social media is a standard form of interaction, so they will feel less isolation than those less accustomed to this form of connection.” The upside of the current situation for many people is a chance to refocus, she says. “From a spiritual perspective, it can be seen as a sacred and powerful time to slow down. For those who have the privilege of slowing down, it is a beautiful practice to sink into.” ■

# COVID-19 gives Lenten study legs

BY BOB QUICKE, PARISH OF CENTRAL SAANICH

It started out as a perfectly normal idea: throughout Lent, the weekly Bible study which follows our Wednesday 10:00 am Eucharist at the Parish of Central Saanich would focus on exploring Watershed Discipleship edited by Ched Myers. This is a book of essays centred around the question of Christian response and responsibility to the currently popular discourse over climate change and the environment. Even more appealing; the discussions would be led by our curate, Matt Humphrey, author of one of those essays. Prior to undertaking theological training in pursuit of Anglican ordination, Matt and his wife, Roxy, were with Arocha, a world-wide Christian environmental organization. Thus, Matt has both a scriptural and practical perspective on the topics found within our study book.

Shortly after this study commenced, the COVID-19 pandemic intervened, and in responsible adherence to governmental directives, Bishop Logan closed down all diocesan gatherings, leaving the dozen study participants adrift, continuing as best they could on their own.

That’s when providential circumstance, geographic convenience and personal initiative rose to the occasion. Within the study group is Garth van der Kamp, a retired hydrologist now

residing in Saanichton. He pointed out to Matt that, since we could not study together indoors, why not study the natural watershed in our own village outdoors. He offered to contribute from his years of professional experience as Matt contributed from his own theological background.

Each Wednesday, at Garth’s invitation, a small number of the study participants meet to explore a portion of the local watershed within Saanichton. Walking (at least two metres apart) along

the pathway’s creekside, Garth explains to us the dynamics of water flow and its effects on the nearby growth while Matt reminds us that from Genesis on through the Scriptures, God’s mandate to humanity has always been to be true stewards of creation.

Within this local watershed we are drawn, again and again, to recognize how the interaction of both human and natural factors have influenced our environment. These factors include: artificial banks beside creeks, the result

of human dredging to enhance farmland drainage; natural bank erosion due to sudden rainfall deluges; and the standing dead cedars looming high above their thriving fir neighbours, a consequence of the successively drier summers brought about by global warming.

This is proving to be an enlightening and provocative insight into how humanity, for the most part, has abdicated its duty to both God and his gift of creation. Yet attitudes and behaviours are changing. Individuals and organizations, such as the Peninsula Streams Society, are increasing efforts

to look after our watersheds. The building of “rain garden” infiltration pits reduce flooding, while “stream keepers” work to restore the creek and its watershed. The situation is looking better, but there is still lots of work to be done. ■

*Bob Quicke arrived on the Saanich Peninsula in May 2016. He is a member of the Parish of Central Saanich, sings with the choir of St. Mary under the direction of his wife, Cathy, and since February 2017 has been the Administrator at St. Stephen, the 157-year-old historic congregation in the Mount Newton Valley.*



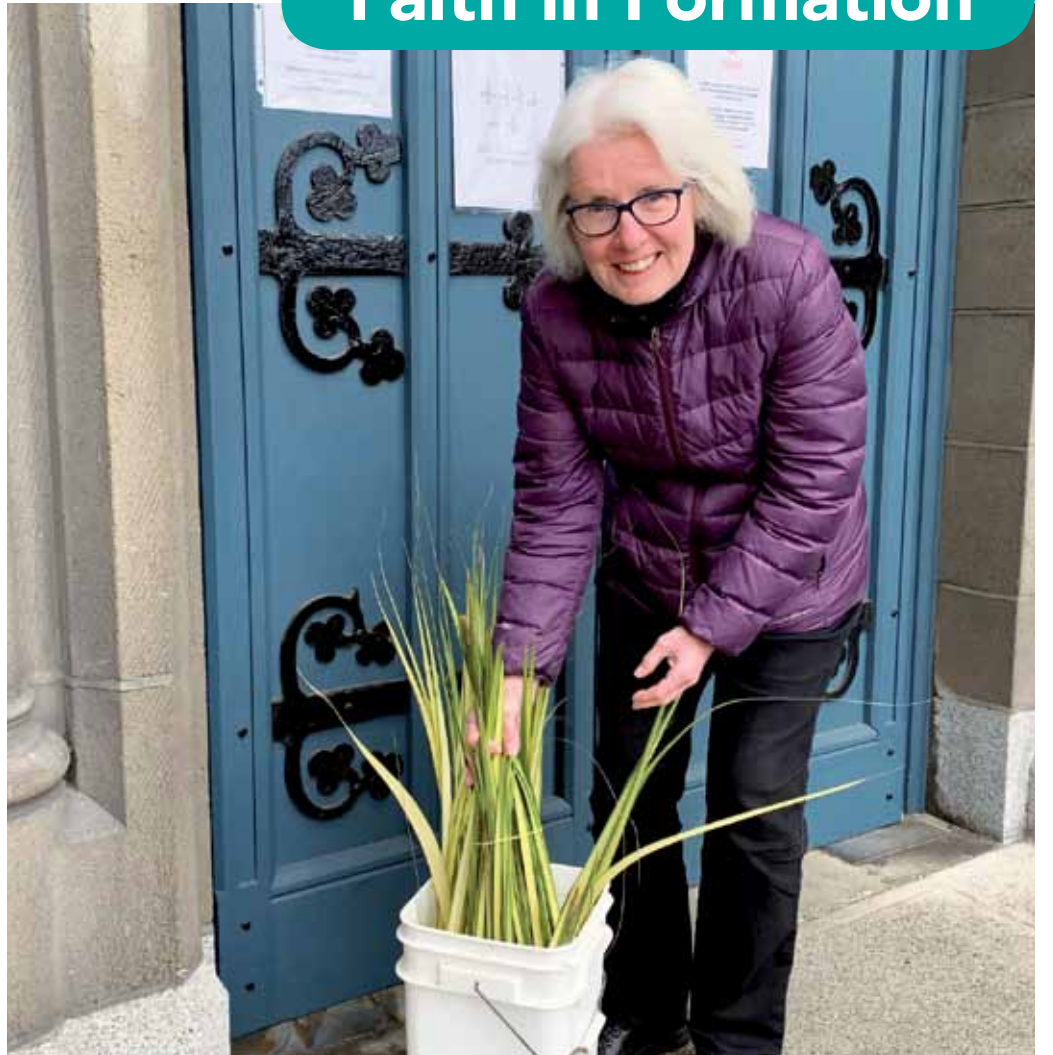
The watershed study group goes on a socially-distanced hike. Photo by Bob Quicke



## Faith in Formation



*Sign of the Times: a poster encourages people to enjoy the grounds for meditation outside St. Peter, Comox.*



*Do-it-yourself Palm Sunday: Christ Church Cathedral Sacristan Elaine Ellison places buckets of palms outside the closed building, allowing people to fold the traditional crosses at home. Photo by Susan Down*

# Coronavirus coping: Selkirk

BY DAWNA WALL

Scrambling, sacred, scattered and stillness are some of the words we might use to describe Lent in the Selkirk region. As the restrictions around gatherings and use of our church space changed, each parish has responded in the ways they are able. Some immediately moved to online gatherings, while others recorded services in their spaces

for the first week and then from home.

The Cathedral's recordings were shared and appreciated, and many noted what a gift it has been to attend several services and to worship with other communities while still supporting their own. Some have offered daily prayer online and alerted their surrounding communities to the changes in format with signage, websites and bell ringing. Website

coordinators have stepped up their work to offer frequent updates and increased content. People within and outside of the worshipping congregations have called and offered assistance for grocery pickups and drop offs, rent and grocery assistance. Pastoral care phone calls and notes and e-blasts have been used to stay connected.

Holy Week worship and connections were vast and

varied, with individual prayer walks on Palm Sunday, Zoom Agape suppers were organized for Maundy Thursday as well as a Virtual Stations of the Cross for Good Friday created by parish families for sharing in the telling of Christ's Passion. Some Sunday School programs have been connecting virtually, with play time and snacks afterwards as they usually do, but all from their own homes. Priests have

shared in personal prayers with parishioners via the virtual means available to them. The learning curve for Lent, Holy Week, and the celebration of the Resurrection was exponential as we all worked to flatten the COVID 19 curve whilst staying faithful, creative and responsive to God's call in a wilderness place. ■

*Dawna Wall is archdeacon Selkirk Region, and rector of St. Michael and All Angels.*

# The trip of a lifetime!

BY ALASTAIR MCCOLLUM

It was the trip of a lifetime, for good, and maybe not-so-good reasons. My wife, Sabina, and I were due to take a month from the beginning of March to the beginning of April for a belated honeymoon in India – a chance to meet her family, see something of the sights and culture from which Sabina comes, and spend some time together. We had changed our plans to avoid flying to and from Delhi via Beijing, and novel coronavirus seemed like an inconvenience, rather than a crisis at that point.

After a few days in Delhi seeing a few sights and visiting with family, Sabina and I took a flight to

Trivandrum in Kerala, the south of India. It was when we arrived at the airport that the first signs of the seriousness of COVID-19 appeared: we were all screened and checked for fever on arrival. Nonetheless there were, at that time, no restrictions on travel and it was only a few days later that hotels started refusing to take new guests and gathering places were being shut. Our friendly tuktuk driver in Kochi took us under his wing and showed us as much as he could, safely, around the ancient city.

Then we continued with our schedule, but we recognised that rather than the usual trips to the Taj Mahal and Golden Temple we had planned, it was time to

hunker down with family in the Punjab. After six hours of internal flights and a seven-hour cab ride, we arrived in Ludhiana, where we were greeted with a warm welcome and great hospitality by the family – with whom we practised some sensible self-isolation, and had lots of time to chat, eat wonderful food, and even do some dancing.

It became more apparent that the COVID-19 situation was getting worse, though India had not taken drastic measures yet. Then the call came from family in Kamloops that we needed to come home immediately, as the border was being closed to everyone except Canadian citizens, Permanent Residents, and their immediate families. We lined up for an anxious couple of hours in Delhi Airport, having had all the arrangements for our return made by Sabina's family in Canada.

We made it, though, having cut our trip by 10 days, and returned home to a very different Victoria to the one we left – with quiet streets, closed stores, and few people out and about. It became apparent very quickly that my duties as archdeacon and Incumbent would need to resume as soon as was possible and, fortunately, having missed out on jetlag for some incomprehensible reason, I was able to join in the round of email conversations, zoom meetings, and telephone calls, which have characterised many of our interactions over the past few weeks.

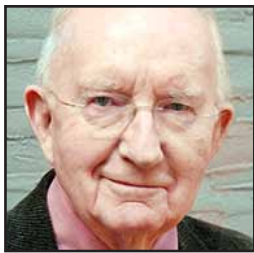
Though we cannot meet for worship, there are many creative approaches being taken as to how we can continue to be a worshipping presence, and offer a sense of care and community, in these uncertain times.

As our Bishop has said, this is perhaps a lesson for us to consider what this might mean for being church in future – that the lessons we learn here may well stand us in good stead for the changes, the transformation, we will need to undergo as the body of Christ moving forward together. Since I was a young and enthusiastic teen follower of Jesus I have heard, and said myself, that "Church is not about the building, but about the people," now may be the time we have to consider putting real meaning into that statement, whilst also remembering and appreciating the gift our forebears left us in the legacy of the 'prayers in wood and stone' which make up our parish buildings. ■

*Alastair McCollum is rector of St. John the Divine, Victoria and archdeacon of Tolmie region.*



# An Unquenchable Hope



## Reflections

BY HERBERT O'DRISCOLL

On the great west front of Norwich Cathedral there is the statue of a woman. The strong, fined-boned face would suggest that she is portrayed as a woman in her 40s. Her eyes gaze into the distance across the city in which she lived all her life. A simple cloth covers her hair. Around her neck and shoulders is draped a heavy, layered scarf remarkably like those worn today.

Tucked under her left arm and held firmly in her hand is a book she wrote. Its title: Revelations of Divine Love, the earliest surviving book in English written by a woman. Today, the Christian world acknowledges its contents to be among the greatest treasures of the faith.

Perhaps the term "surviving" is well earned. Because the medieval church could not bring itself to officially acknowledge the gifts of a woman, the manuscript of the book was preserved by generations of Benedictine sisters. We owe these women an immense debt, because without their care of this manuscript, it is possible that Christian faith might have lost the memory of one who is among the greatest, if not the greatest, of Christian mystics.

Julian was six years old when the contagion that would come to be known as the Black Death would decimate her world. We know that Julian survived the virus as we have a mention of her conversing with her mother in her late 20s. About a decade later, we know that she became what was in her time called an anchoress, a woman who lived alone in a church cell and was looked to as a source of wisdom and sanctity.

In May 1373, at the age of 30, Julian contracted a life-threatening illness. It may have been a recurrence of what we today would call a virus. In that century there were recurrences

of plague. Whatever that health crisis was, it transformed Julian into the spiritual mystic she would become in her own time and indeed ever since.

All night long, as she tells us in her revelations, vision after vision of the crucified and risen Jesus came to her, 15 visions in all, each one allowing her to converse with her Lord. The great gift she gave to future generations was to write the experiences of those extraordinary night hours, something quite unusual for a woman of her time.

Somewhere in her manuscript there is a passage that surfaced in the cultural turmoil of the 1960s and served to reintroduce an almost-forgotten Julian to the modern world. It's an exchange between Julian and our Lord in which he shows her God's hand with a hazelnut in the outstretched palm. Puzzled, Julian asks our Lord what the hazelnut means. He tells her that it is a symbol of everything God has created. In this Julian is to see three things of God's Creation: that God is its maker, its lover and its keeper.

That short exchange in Julian's manuscript seemed to speak eloquently to a late 20th-century

world that was becoming aware of the all-important responsibility humanity bears to protect its own natural environment.

That exchange between Julian and her Lord has attached to it a promise that continues to echo down the centuries, a promise that has become overwhelmingly important in this present time of world-wide anxiety and fear. Julian recalls our Lord's words precisely. She is told that "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

Those utterly simple words, promising a sublime hope for Creation and history, can be heard quoted again and again in our own deeply shadowed time of viral infection and its threatening consequences. We quote them because they promise a divine hope. We also owe a huge debt to a woman who, even though her life was surrounded by plague and fear, passed on that divine promise to future generations.

A final thought. There is a debt we owe that is all too easily forgotten, a debt to the treasures of Jewish wisdom. Somewhere in that great treasure house there is the remark of some sage about Moses and the Exodus journey. Moses, it is said, was

not a person of fear. He did not fear the burdens of leadership, nor fear enemies nor the dangers of the wilderness. There was only one thing he feared: that the people would lose hope. Then, and only then, would the great journey end.

So let's join one another in remaining a people of hope.

*Herbert O'Driscoll is a retired priest and a prolific author and hymn writer. ■*



Julian of Norwich

# Tale of two cities

BY KATE NEWMAN AND JOHN THATAMANIL

## Husband and wife share thoughts on being apart during COVID-19

*Kate:* I am sitting at my kitchen table in Victoria in the afternoon sun on a Tuesday. I am looking at the screen of my Apple computer as I type. In the upper right corner, I see a rectangular box which holds the image of my husband who is 4741 kilometres away in New York City.

"John, is it true that you are in the hardest-hit area of the US for COVID-19?" I first heard this possibility this morning. I watch my husband in the corner of the screen pause. He types his answer. This might not be a good sign.

*John:* Yes, love. Two days ago, the NY Times had a story with the headline, "New York City Region Is Now an Epicenter of the Coronavirus Pandemic." Five per cent of the entire planet's COVID-19 cases are here. I didn't want to tell you; I knew you would worry.

*Kate:* Ugh. It's not good news. But so are a lot of things these days. I take a deep breath and remind myself to pray again before I do anything else. I pause and look out through my window up at the grey black cloud bank coming in from the Pacific Ocean.

He is in the midst of the hardest-hit region in the USA, and he has asthma.

*John:* The streets are deserted here. Friends from across the globe have seen videos of Times Square empty and have written notes of concern. Friends from Victoria who have never written before are texting expressions of kindness.

*Kate:* Feeling a little lost and dizzy, I have to make myself pause. I imagine myself on a ladder, miles high; I am climbing and staring down at lofty cumulus – terrified of heights. The lectionary, it is the next rung of the ladder. I turn again to the daily office and read Psalm 146. Praise the Lord, my soul. For the picture of the one I love in the top right-hand corner of the screen, for the lungs that keep him sturdy, for his daughter who picks up the grocery delivery, for the water that cleans their hands, for the soap and for the psalms. I am thankful.

*John:* Thanks for your prayers, love. The warmth of your care and your intimacy with God are a comfort to me. You know how tempted I was to travel to Victoria on March 12, just as all this was beginning. But, given my asthma and the need to travel through multiple airports, and the possibility of getting stuck in Canada, I decided not to travel through airports, risk becoming infected, and

inadvertently worsening the situation in Victoria. It was the right decision though not an easy one.

But my "sacrifice" in being separated from you is small compared to the many here in New York who risk their lives in service to the sick. Stories of sickness and even death among healthcare workers are now common. Christell Cadet, a 34 year old paramedic, an asthmatic like me, is fighting for her life. Far worse is the news about, 48-year-old nurse, Kious Kelly, who has died of the virus. Like Christell, he too was an asthmatic. His co-workers are furious because they work in a hospital in which healthcare workers have taken to wearing garbage bags because they are short of personal protective equipment (PPE).

But New York's story is not just a tale of loss but of heroism. After Gov. Cuomo put out a call for health workers to help cope with the emergency, 52,000 volunteered, many coming

out of retirement. 52,000, Kate! So often, we believe heroic goodness is found only in a handful of exceptional people like Mother Theresa, but it seems that New York State alone has 52,000 Mother Therasas. But, theologically speaking, the lesson is that even that number is a vast undercount. We, bearers of the divine image, all hold enormous capacities for compassion. Whether we serve on the front lines or shelter in place to arrest the spread of this virus, we do so because we wish and work for the health and safety of neighbors God has given us to love. When the story of this time is written, it will be a story not just of loss but, first and foremost, of a love that is both extraordinary and yet utterly ordinary. ■

*Kate Newman is director of children, youth and families at Christ Church Cathedral and Dr. John Thatamanil teaches theology in New York City.*

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# Wonder of the water

## My Journey

BY WILL HUBBARD  
RECTOR, CHRIST CHURCH  
IN ALERT BAY

### A regular Q&A feature on island clergy

I grew up in a small town in Ontario – Iroquois (between Cornwall and Brockville). I saw the water every morning, finding great comfort in that sight. I had two brothers and two sisters, and we were raised Anglican. My mom was the treasurer and my father was a church warden. I remember wonderful things like church picnics, and teatime after holy

communion. I loved the social conviviality. There weren't many occasions for people to gather so the church was it.

When I was 13, my father was given about three months to live. I had a lot of anxiety about what would happen. He ended up dying when I was 21. As a result, I grew up around hospitals, so I decided when I was 14 that I wanted to be a hospital chaplain when I grew up. I would later do that for seven years. Through the practice of joining and accommodation, you develop a commonality, and you develop trust in a short period of time. It's very dynamic as you move through their lives. Being a chaplain is all about hospitality and listening. It's listening that is the most important thing about being a priest. I've grown quieter as I get older, after many experiences of holding people's hands so they wouldn't die alone.

After high school, I worked in the infantry reserves, and then worked as a roughneck

on the oil rigs in Cold Lake, Alberta. I returned to Ontario to attend the University of Ottawa, where I got a bachelor's degree in English and philosophy. I love poetry, especially Canadians such as Alden Nowlan and Al Purdy, and others such as Williams Carlos Williams and T.S. Eliot. And modern poets such as Mary Oliver. I had a dear professor who encouraged me to be a support person; he was thinking social worker rather than priest. After graduating, I worked as a deckhand on Great Lakes cruise ships for a while. Then because I had a girlfriend in London, I chose Huron College to complete my master's degree in divinity before doing my clinical pastoral education for two years at McMaster University. It is the training you need to be certified as a hospital chaplain. I chose to focus on two areas: brain injuries and pediatrics.

While working as a chaplain at St Paul's Hospital in Vancouver I got a part-

time job in the reserves as a military padre with the Royal Westminster infantry regiment. Then I joined the regular Canadian Forces and served from 2008 to 2019 in Winnipeg, Cold Lake, and finally, Comox. I was deployed to Kuwait in 2016 as we battled against ISIS. Even though I was not in a combat role, I was working 16-hour days just the same, helping the others get through the experience, especially when being apart from the people they loved.

*I wake up every morning  
and give thanks that  
I can see the sweeping  
wonder of the water*

People make the distinction between institutional religion and spirituality. I don't buy that; it's not a neat little box. The word religion stems from a Latin word meaning "to bind oneself to."

I chose to come the Alert Bay in May of 2019 because in my early career I served First Nations communities, and also I worked on the rigs alongside First Nations guys. Their struggle is rooted in being viewed as second-class citizens. We often act out of our misunderstanding of them. My job is less about Sunday worship and more about serving the community at large – about 1500 people. I hear about the way things were, and I go to all the potlatches. I practice unconditional acceptance as a sound way of working with people. If you have trust you can move forward with the relationships. It's a top-notch position, and it's restorative for me, too, because I've seen a lot in my life. I wake up every morning and give thanks that I can see the sweeping wonder of the water from the rectory. ■

# National organ festival cancelled

A week-long festival in celebration of the pipe organ, to be hosted in Victoria in July, has been cancelled, one of the many arts events to fall victim of the social distancing

mandated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sounding Heaven and Earth was going to offer audiences an intensive evening concert series featuring both Canadian and international headliners, coinciding with the national convention of the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO), the oldest association of musicians in Canada and the national voice for Canada's organ community.

The RCCO's BC director, Sandra Fletcher, said that while they know it was the wise decision, she is concerned for the musicians. "When a festival like this is cancelled for reasons beyond our control, the performers who were contracted to perform lose a significant amount of income. Freelance musicians, artists, writers will be struggling

to make ends meet for the foreseeable future," she said.

The local committee is hoping that following the crisis, depending on logistics, it can present some of the concerts in the future, but not as part of a larger festival. Next year Organ Festival Canada will be hosted in Hamilton. Festival planning has begun for many of the future festivals, and Victoria will have

to wait until at least 2027 for another chance to host.

In the meantime, organists will have to practice at home, or consider slipping into empty churches. "One organist wrote to me saying that he will be going into the church to 'blow some wind through the organ to keep the leather supple and so the pipes remember what they are supposed to do,'" said Fletcher.

## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

SUBMISSION DEADLINES ARE THE 25TH OF THE MONTH (TWO MONTHS IN ADVANCE OF EACH ISSUE)  
NEXT SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS MAY 25TH (FOR THE JULY ISSUE).



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# DC holds virtual meeting amidst COVID-19



## Fly on the Wall

BY CATHERINE PATE

*This regular column reports on the activities and decisions of Diocesan Council, the “synod between synods” of our diocese. Download monthly meeting minutes at [www.bc.anglican.ca/diocesan-committees/diocesan-council](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/diocesan-committees/diocesan-council).*

The March diocesan council meeting was held via video conference (Zoom) technology. During the truncated two-hour meeting, council business was understandably preoccupied with issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and implications for church ministry across the diocese.

One such issue was the upcoming episcopal election (tentatively scheduled for June 27). After a thoughtful discussion, council voted to postpone the synod to the fall,

with no date set (as of the Post’s deadline April 3). With Bishop Logan McMenamie retiring May 1, and until a new bishop is elected, the diocese is currently under the administrative leadership of Ansley Tucker, dean of Columbia.

Transforming Futures continues to be a priority for diocesan council. Given the reality of COVID-19, the opportunity to think creatively about new ways of being church has never seemed so urgent. The Transforming Futures team will continue to work with parishes in moving their conversations forward towards case development, recognizing that timelines and expectations will have to shift given the current situation.

Christ Church Cathedral reported on a pilot project it is engaged in. The cathedral is currently testing a new governance model for its parish council and sub-committees. The expectation is that the parish council will become more of a visioning and strategic leadership body, leaving operational decision-making to staff and committees of the council.

Ian Alexander, chair of the Vision Fund jury,

provided an update to council and indicated that a full report, along with funding recommendations, would be brought to council at its May meeting. Two projects received funding in the first quarter of the year. This information will be available online later this month at [www.bc.anglican.ca/vision/vision-fund](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/vision/vision-fund).

Also, as a member of Council of General Synod (CoGS), he provided council with a brief report on its most recent meeting. The work of the council is primarily focused on the strategic planning process of the national church, but the COVID-19 pandemic was also a dominant theme on the agenda. Highlights from this meeting are available on the national church website [www.anglican.ca/about/ccc/cogs/highlights/](http://www.anglican.ca/about/ccc/cogs/highlights/).

Noted in council minutes is the urgent need for the appointment of a lay secretary to synod. This position is elected at synod, but with the resignation of Judy Trueman in the fall of 2019, the canons stipulate that the bishop may appoint a replacement. Interested parties may contact Barry Foster, executive officer of the diocese, for more information. ■

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### RETREATS 2020-2021

**WARD BAUMAN**  
June 10—13, 2020  
Bethlehem Centre,  
Nanaimo, BC Canada

**MATTHEW WRIGHT**  
August 18—21, 2020  
Cowichan Lake Research  
Station, BC Canada

**CYNTHIA BOURGEAULT**  
April 23—27, 2021  
Cowichan Lake Research  
Station, BC Canada

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*Catherine Pate is the diocesan communications officer, responsible for supporting and animating effective communications in all expressions of the diocese.*



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Photo: Chaplain Rev. Cathy Victor (R) spending time with one of Veteran Memorial Lodge's lovely residents.

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**DIOCESAN POST WELCOMES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**