

DIOCESAN EPOST

Celebrating the Diocese of British Columbia

A Section of the ANGLICAN JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2020

Virtual vote to decide new bishop

BY SUSAN DOWN

If you've ever watched a political leadership convention on TV, you know the highlights are usually far apart, punctuating long periods of watching-paint-dry dullness as delegates move around, pick up and cast ballots and then wait for them to be

counted and double-checked manually. In the church's electoral world, those time lags are filled in with singing and praying and milling about as people await the results. Electoral synods can be several hours because of the laborious process of counting paper ballots.

Election by the numbers

Candidates: 7

Parishes: 44

Voting delegates: over 150

When: Saturday, Sept. 26

Time: 9:00 am (Eucharist) and 11:00

am Synod election begins

By contrast, the Sept. 26 episcopal election synod being held online will likely be remembered as both a historic first in Canada and as an efficient and interesting process for both viewers and the more than 150 voting delegates. Originally scheduled for June following the retirement of Bishop Logan in May, the electoral synod was postponed and then rescheduled online due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The diocese is using Simply Voting software and hiring Canadian company Data on the Spot (the company that did the clicker voting at General Synod) to manage the electronic vote. An electoral officer and deputy electoral officer will oversee the voting.

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Faith in Action

Warden Michael Wolff handles the new protocol for worshippers at Christ Church Cathedral in July.

Bishop will face challenge and opportunity

BY SUSAN DOWN

The Diocese of British Columbia is preparing to make history September 26 when delegates vote for a new bishop in the first online episcopal

election synod in a diocese in the Anglican Church of Canada (Note: Canadian military chaplains elected their bishop through an online vote in 2016).

The election comes at a time of exceptional challenges for the church and the broader community, and the new bishop chosen from the field of seven candidates (see page 4) will face some

serious issues identified by the diocese, issues such as reconciliation and systemic racism, environmental stewardship and community change. Candidates will be familiar with the diocese initiatives on reconciliation

during Bishop Logan's episcopacy, and the formation of an environmental group called Creation Matters. These topics are at the forefront of public conversation and discourse right now,

Continued on page 8

Pray for the candidates



Dean's Corner
BY ANSLEY TUCKER

As our diocese inches ever closer to the selection of a new bishop, I bid you pray for those allowing their names to stand for consideration.

The selection of a bishop, despite electoral procedures that are uncannily similar to those we employ to choose leaders of political parties, is meant to be something quite different.

As someone who has stood twice for

episcopal election, and participated as an elector in many, many more, I venture to caution our Synod to take this difference to heart.

An episcopal election is neither a contest nor a promotion board. To be selected bishop is not a prize for a job well done. That is because what we need in a bishop is not necessarily what we need in a priest. So let us stop using language that speaks of people “applying,” or worse, “running” for bishop. Let us put aside practices that look like political campaigning (This includes squelching the pernicious assumption that anytime one of the candidates does or

says something good or kind, he or she is “only” currying favour).

The selection of a bishop, despite electoral procedures that are uncannily similar to those we employ to choose leaders of political parties, is meant to be something quite different.

On the contrary all of us are being called to a process of careful discernment. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are seeking clarity about the needs of our diocese (not just of our own parishes), and about the gifts and convictions of those who are making themselves vulnerable to our scrutiny.

On this latter point, please remember that these are tender times for our episcopal candidates. Unlike any other hiring process in our church, the selection of a bishop is just so, well, public. Firstly, everyone back home knows that you're willing to contemplate leaving. Secondly, every candidate's material is being examined by every elector – not just the bishop's consultation committee – and every candidate's suitability is a topic of conversation. On the day of the election, there is no buffer period or privacy for candidates to come to their own conclusions about why they haven't heard anything yet. The candidates find out when we do. And, let's be honest: regardless of how deeply committed people are to the wisdom

and leadership of the Spirit, we all like to be “picked.” There isn't one candidate who hasn't wrestled hard with his or her own suitability and calling to episcopal ministry, and there isn't one candidate who won't be engaged in deep self-reflection on September 27. In the immediacy of the vote, there's a need for quite a lot of grace.

So, dear people of God, please pray. Pray for the Church. Pray for the candidates. And remember that regardless of whom we elect, we have been and continue to be deeply blessed by the ministry of all our candidates. ■

The Very Rev. Ansley Tucker is the rector of Christ Church Cathedral and dean of Columbia. She is also acting as the senior diocesan administrator.

Diocesan Post

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News, letters and other articles are welcome. Please limit articles to 500 words and letters to 200 words. Submissions must include name and contact information of the author.

Pictures must be a resolution of 300 DPI and in sharp focus. Clearly and accurately identify the name of all subjects as well as the person who took the picture.

New Submission Deadlines

Jan issue - Nov 25
Feb issue - Dec 25
March issue - Jan 25
April issue - Feb 25
May issue - March 25
June issue - April 25
Sept issue - July 25
Oct issue - Aug 25
Nov issue - Sept 25
Dec issue - Oct 25

All material is subject to editing.

Volume 54, No 7



During one of the many online services through the diocese, Dave and Lisa Taylor lead the hymn for St. Philip, Comox.

Reopening for worship

Our concept of what it means to be a church community has been challenged this year, a notion explored on the next two pages. After months of living in what felt like lockdown, due to Covid-19 health guidelines, shuttered churches in the Diocese of British Columbia began holding

services for small groups of worshippers on July 12. During the summer, 16 churches chose this option. After Labour Day, there will be more than 30 churches offering some version of in-person worship such as a Eucharist or a Service of the Word, either indoors or out. So far, 11 churches remain closed and have not expressed any intention to resume in-person worship. —Susan Down

Personnel Updates

Katherine Walker has accepted the appointment of assistant curate to St Paul, Nanaimo, commencing duties June 1, 2020.

Dimas Canjura has retired as incumbent to Holy Trinity, effective July 1, 2020.

Stephanie Wood has accepted the appointment of assistant curate to St John the Divine, Victoria, commencing June 1, 2020.

Alastair Hunting has resigned as incumbent at St Columba, Port Hardy,

and St John, Port Alice, to accept the appointment as incumbent at St John the Divine, Courtenay, effective November 1, 2020.

Paul Schumacher has accepted the appointment as interim priest-in-charge at Church of the Advent, Colwood, effective August 1, 2020. He succeeds previous incumbent Sandra Hounsell-Drover who has moved to Kingston, Ontario, where her husband John Hounsell-Drover, chaplain to the Canadian Forces and past priest of the Diocese of British Columbia, is on a long-term posting.

Aneeta Saroop has resigned as incumbent at St Mary of the Incarnation, Metchosin to serve as pastor of Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, in Vancouver, effective December 1, 2020. She will continue as incumbent in Metchosin until November.

Bishop Logan will come out of retirement to ordain Matthew Humphrey and Gail Rodger to the sacred Order of Priests at Christ Church Cathedral on September 20, 2020 at 4:30 pm. The event will be live streamed.

From the Chancellor

The present health crisis has required diocesan council and the synod staff to work creatively to develop a meeting format that complies with the Canons in the face of

the restrictions that have been imposed on public gatherings. Drawing on material developed by the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia for the election of the archbishop in 2018, the diocese has met this challenge by bringing in changes to the regulations that enable meetings to be held virtually. It may

well be that the virtual election to be held on Saturday, September 26 will represent the first formal meeting of an Anglican diocesan synod entirely by electronic means.

I am confident that all synod delegates will rise to the challenge of becoming familiar with the resources we will use to meet in

this way. Because we will be geographically separated, many will feel the absence of the ability to confer widely with colleagues informally as the election proceeds. I hope that delegates will be able to find other ways to share their impressions as they discharge

their important responsibility. By embracing this new technology, the diocese is demonstrating that the Church in the 21st century remains relevant, and able to adapt to dramatically changing conditions. ■

—Robert Gill, Chancellor

Below are the seven candidates nominated in the episcopal election. You can find detailed responses and videos from each one on the website.

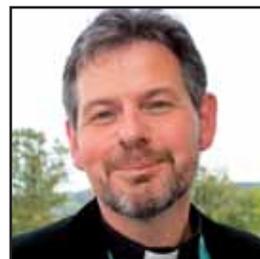
Bishop Candidates



The Rev. Canon Kevin Arndt
Ordained: 1998 (deacon), 1999 (priest) in the Diocese of BC
Present positions: Associate priest, St. John the Divine, Victoria; Chaplain at Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre



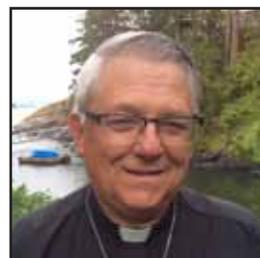
The Rev. Anna Greenwood-Lee
Ordained: 2000 (deacon), 2001 (priest) in the Diocese of Calgary
Present position: Incumbent, St. Laurence, Diocese of Calgary



The Ven. Alastair Singh-McCollum
Ordained: 1996 (deacon), 1997 (priest) in the Diocese of London, UK
Present position: Incumbent, St. John the Divine, Diocese of BC



The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Cooper
Ordained: 2006 (deacon), 2007 (priest) Diocese of Bristol
Present positions: Director of Initial Ministerial Education (Diocese of Durham and Diocese of Newcastle)



The Rev. Lon Towstego
Ordained: 2005 (deacon), 2006 (priest) in the Diocese of BC
Present position: Incumbent, Parish of Central Saanich, Diocese of BC

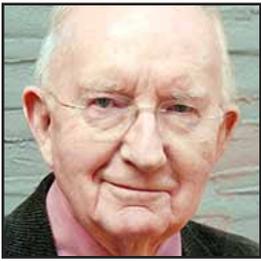


The Ven. Douglas Fenton
Ordained: 1980 (deacon), 1981 (priest) in the Diocese of Keewatin
Present position: Executive Archdeacon of the Diocese of New Westminster



The Ven. Dr. Dawna Wall
Ordained: 2006 (deacon), 2007 (priest) in the Diocese of Ottawa
Present position: Incumbent, St. Michael and All Angels (Royal Oak), Diocese of BC

An ancient distancing



Reflections
BY HERBERT
O'DRISCOLL

From where he sat in the evening sun, he could see the family vineyard. Four generations of loving care and hard work had made it into a thing of beauty. Its grapes were heavy on the branches, its wine praised by visitor and neighbour alike. Suddenly tears came as he felt a great wave of gratitude that he was once again able to sit in his own home, his beloved Miriam nearby, his son and two daughters involved in the family enterprise.

Only a year ago he had thought everything was irretrievably lost. The nightmare had begun when he noticed a skin lesion on his forearm. In that climate such lesions were many and varied, appearing and fading seasonally. He would look at it, persuading himself that it was not growing and changing. His fear had a name that he did not wish to say even to himself, let alone to Miriam, his wife.

The day that his trusted foreman mentioned it to

him made him realize that he had no choice. He had to show himself to the local priest. At last it was Miriam who insisted, lovingly but firmly. When they did go, their worst fears were confirmed.

The law was implacable. From the moment of his being named a leper he had to isolate himself as quickly as possible from every aspect of his personal and social world. The first awful night was spent in making frantic decisions. Where could he go? The news of his misfortune spread quickly. Neighbours came to wish him well from a distance, calling their good wishes from the edge of the property.

One voice stood out for him. A family nearby had been through this agony, losing a member to a similar diagnosis of leprosy. They knew where a large group of men and women had formed a lepers' community, a place south of Jezreel where the foothills of Samaria began. Among the many wadis [valleys] there was one that had a stream running through it. A two-day walk would take him there.

He recalled the terrible realities of the place, the pathetic shacks built to find shelter from the elements, the caves where the most far gone sufferers lived out the

ghastly late stages of the disease. Sometimes they could be seen sitting at the mouth of the cave desperate for human companionship, their ravaged faces masked by filthy rags. Yet even here he had soon learned the ways in which those with earlier stages of the disease would try to respond to such suffering, even if only to place a bowl of food outside the cave before distancing themselves from the dreaded contagion.

Then he had heard words he would recall until the day he died. The quiet voice said, "You are not a leper. Go and show yourself to a priest."

What had made life possible at all was that families of those in this terrible isolation would come to the outer edges of the community with food and clothing. There could be no contact beyond greetings from a distance, as the law demanded that no leprosy person could be approached nearer than 150 yards. The family would leave gifts, retreat, and wait for their loved one to emerge from the area and pick up whatever had been left. Such gifts, shared with immense generosity within the colony, not only made life possible

but formed bonds of affection and gratitude.

He recalled the shallow stream that flowed through the wadi. It made it possible for those who wished to seek personal cleanliness, hoping to keep disease at bay. He himself regularly bathed, responding to Miriam's constant encouragement to do so when she came with other families to visit at a distance. Her family came from a long line of rabbis committed to personal cleanliness as essential to health. With absolute determination she now applied this to her husband's wellbeing. His lesion had not shown the signs of a developing leprosy. From Miriam's rabbinical home life she was very aware that a priest's diagnosis could be wrong. She was also aware that to challenge a diagnosis without clear and certain evidence was dangerous. A failed appeal could end any hope of her husband return home. In all this, she never faltered in her hope.

Months had gone by, months of hoping and despairing. Then in a way that neither he nor Miriam could have possibly expected, their lives changed.

A few of the younger men in the colony, still at the relatively early stage of infection, would hunt in the back country to supply meat for the community. On one of these forays, he became separated

from his companions. In the distance he saw a small group of men walking south, and one of them began to walk towards him. The stranger paid no attention to his frantic warnings to stay back. Greetings were exchanged, and the stranger inquired about the length of his stay in the colony and asked to see the lesion. Baring his arm, he felt the stranger's touch pressing the surrounding flesh. Then he had heard words he would recall until the day he died. The quiet voice said, "You are not a leper. Go and show yourself to a priest."

In the ensuing months following his ecstatic return home, he and Miriam had shared that never-to-be-forgotten encounter: the stranger ignoring all that separated a sufferer from human intercourse; the unhesitating willingness to touch one officially defined a leper; the quiet authority that his lesion was not as the priest had defined it; the final relief when the priest acknowledged he had not developed leprosy while in exile. With heartfelt gratitude, the story was told and retold of the stranger whose name continued to remain unknown. ■

Herbert O'Driscoll is a retired priest, conference leader, and a prolific author of books, hymns and radio scripts.

Virtual vote to decide new bishop

*Continued
from cover*

Organizers will rely on technology not only for voting but also to recreate personal interaction at the meeting. Instead of hallway chats between ballots, delegates can confer and pray using Zoom, the online meeting platform that is by now familiar to many. This will give delegates the opportunity to interact with one another and see each other's faces. "Caucusing this way isn't a normal part of an election but we want to build in some sense of community and because prayer is so important in these times, we wanted to be sure we were intentionally making space for it," said Catherine Pate, diocesan director of communications.

The voting process follows the traditional canonical regulations. The orders (lay

delegates and clergy) vote separately, and to be elected, a candidate must receive a majority (50 per cent plus one) of the votes cast by each order. Balloting may continue until such a majority is achieved. After any ballot a candidate may choose to withdraw. If there has been no election after the third ballot, the number of candidates shall be reduced to five. On each succeeding ballot, the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be removed from eligibility until only two names remain.

While the delegates will be missing the warmth of community inherent in a normal synod, there are environmental, cost and accessibility benefits to holding the event online. Without catering costs for delegates, expenses are lower, but some of that saving will be spent on new technology.

The online option is more environmentally responsible due to less travel and printed material needed. Finally,

the online synod makes the meeting more accessible since it saves travel and meeting time, allowing more remote delegates to take part—people who wouldn't otherwise make the trip to the venue.

With provincial rules restricting gatherings to no more than 50 people, the diocesan council has come up with a creative solution for the more than 150 delegates from the 44 parishes.

The opening eucharist (9:00 am Saturday, Sept. 26) at Christ Church Cathedral will be limited to officers of synod and others involved in the planning of the synod. Most delegates and other members of the diocese will watch the live-streamed version with Archbishop Melissa

Skelton presiding and preaching. With provincial rules restricting gatherings to no more than 50 people, the diocesan council has come up with a creative solution for the more than 150 delegates from the 44 parishes. There were lots of conversations about how to make this accessible to people regardless of their technological capacity, said Ansley Tucker, rector of Christ Church Cathedral, dean of Columbia and diocesan administrator.

Throughout the diocese, parishioners and delegates will be invited to gather in small clusters in their regions. The service will be live streamed so these groups can watch it up to the exchange of the Peace and then carry on in their own places so everybody can receive communion. The archbishop's homily is being pre-recorded and distributed to host parishes for playback or, as an

alternative, ministers can read aloud the archbishop's homily as part of their own complete church services. "What will bind us together is the fact that we're all gathering at the same time to do this although we are in different places. And the fact that everybody will hear the archbishop's homily," said Tucker.

Clara Plamondon, archdeacon of the Cowichan/Malaspina region said that there will be two gathering places for synod delegates to take communion: St. John (Cobble Hill) and St. Phillip (Lantzville).

The day will end less festively than normal, says Pate, but it will be a dramatic moment nonetheless. "We are also hoping to have the bishop-elect on site if they are local or on camera for final announcement. We are trying to build in what we can to make it feel like as much of a celebration as possible." ■

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Gathered in His name

BY IAN ALEXANDER

After 16 weeks of recording services in a locked, empty, often chilly Christ Church Cathedral (the boiler was turned off in mid-March to cut expenses), what a joy it was to return to church in person on July 12, for our first-ever livestream of the gathered community around the Eucharistic table. Mind you, it was hardly business as usual. Seeing only about 35 worshippers (the total was 50 people, including clergy, musicians and singers, wardens, sidespersons, and technical crew) physically distanced throughout the vast space felt, well, a bit weird. There were no hymns, no exchange of the peace, no wine at Communion. But we were together again!

Congregations and individuals have made a variety of decisions about re-opening, just as they have about how to use technology for virtual worship. One of the lessons I think we all have learned is that it won't be an "either-or" situation going forward; it will be "both-and." As someone said during a webinar I attended recently: imagine the metaphor of a teeter-totter, with in-person worship at one end

and online worship at the other. In mid-March, the person on one end was suddenly pushed off the seat, and everything tipped in the other direction. Now, we need to figure out how to recalibrate the balance.

One of the lessons I think we all have learned is that it won't be an "either-or" situation going forward; it will be "both-and."

Another lesson I believe the church as a whole has learned during this liminal time is that we are much nimbler and open to change than we imagined. At the Cathedral, we've known for years that we should be using technology to make ourselves more available and accessible to folks across this Diocese of Islands and Inlets. That point was made loud and clear during our recent strategic visioning process, entitled Greater Works Than These. And, of course, we said, "Yes, sure, we must get around to that," and put it on the list, to be dusted off and returned to some day. But then, suddenly, everything changed, and we just did it. So did parishes



Technology meets liturgy: Ian Alexander and Marilyn Dalzell worked behind the scenes to produce virtual worship services at Christ Church Cathedral. Photo by Susan Down

across the diocese, each in a combination of ways that work best for them: live streaming or pre-recorded, iPhone or digital video camera, Zoom, Facebook or Vimeo.

As I write this, we at the Cathedral plan to continue live streaming our morning Eucharist every week, and we are developing plans for a permanent technical installation to make the process easier and better. For now, we will continue to pre-record Choral Evensong, since that format accommodates a larger choir and higher production values. We're currently doing that in a closed building; at some point, we hope to be able to invite a small congregation to join

us. We're also working with the Synod office on plans to live stream the opening Eucharist of the episcopal election.

Mind you, a new surge or a renewed lockdown could require us to rethink any or all of these plans at any time. National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald recently reminded us of Martin Luther's insight that while scripture and the teachings of the church may be the right hand of God, God's left hand is the unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances and realities of daily life.

It's a work in progress, isn't it? After all, that's what the Greek word "liturgy" literally means:

"the work of the people." As Jesus said in Matthew 18.20, and as the Book of Common Prayer reminds us in the Prayer of St. John Chrysostom, wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, He is with them. And that's true whether we're gathered in church, or at home, or outdoors, or around a screen or, more likely these days, all at once. ■

Diocesan lay canon and retired broadcaster Ian Alexander and his wife Marilyn Dalzell have been using their past professional experience to assist with production of online video services from Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria.

Bishop will face challenge and opportunity

Continued from cover

says Ansley Tucker, rector of Christ Church Cathedral and senior administrator for the diocese. She believes the Church needs to find ways of engaging with these global issues. “That is what is going to make the church relevant and a player in the project of life. That’s not an easy sell in a church that has for centuries been a safe haven from the troubles of the world.”

It’s very difficult to get the church to make the shift, she says, “from caring about those who are in the household of faith which scripture

enjoins us to do, to understanding that the church doesn’t exist for the sake of its own wellbeing. It exists in order to equip people to mend the world that God so loved.”

Wearing the bishop’s mitre mean stepping into a managerial role that will be unlike any previous parish job. “There’s a certain loneliness because you don’t really have a parish home anymore. You are privy to information – trouble, sorrows, misbehavings – that cannot be shared widely,” said Tucker. “And your counsellors must be wise and very few.”

Our diocese has strong and distinctive parishes, and although we put out a message about being stronger together, they continue to function

as “autonomous franchisees,” rather than sharing resources and talents, said Tucker.

The new bishop will take over during

Countering the handwringing with a sense of confidence is a priority, says Tucker.

huge societal shifts in attitudes, says Tucker. “A new task is for us to look at all our policies and practices and language and make changes that will rectify the enduring result of colonialism. Demonstrations get people’s attention, but we need to act, to seek out new voices and to listen.”

To top it off, diocesan leaders also worry about the future of the Anglican community itself. The wake-up call was the Anglican Journal’s explosive coverage in January 2020 of a report outlining that two decades from now, there may be no members left. Countering the handwringing with a sense of confidence is a priority, says Tucker. The current pandemic has offered some hope, convincing people that “we can survive outside of our buildings,” she said.

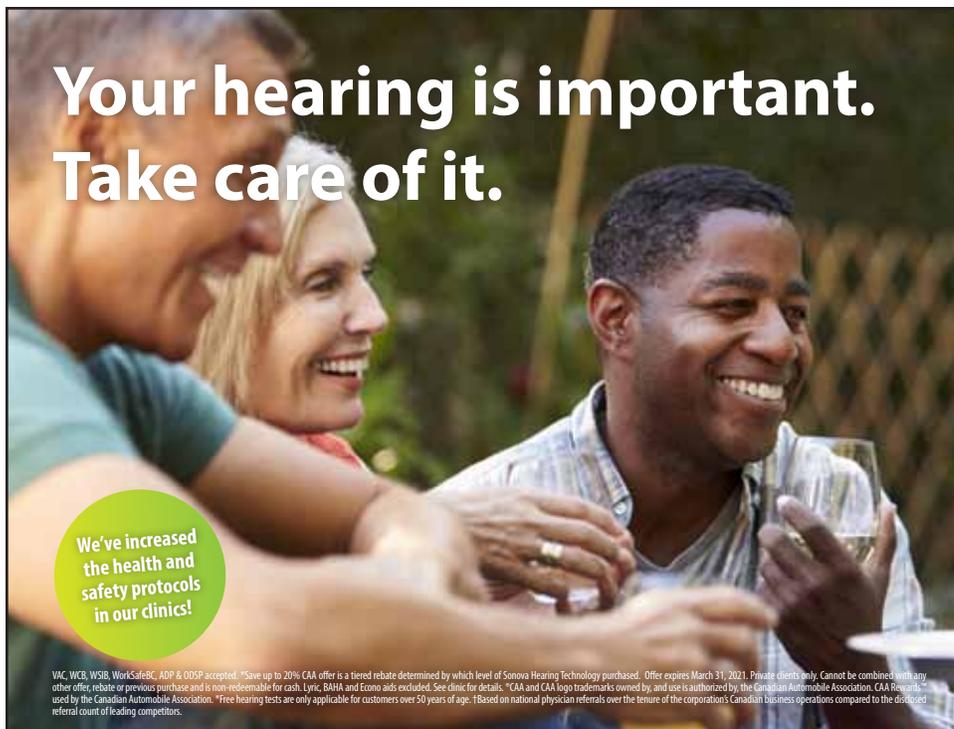
In the face of these challenges, Tucker said we can rally. About 3,500 people gather for worship in this diocese, a group that is large enough to inspire

and direct real change. “If 3,500 people can’t do something then we have a bigger problem: we have a failure of imagination. I know people want to get back to normal. And I hope we recover some sense of steadiness, but we have an opportunity to do things differently.” ■

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Worship at a distance

Pandemic Reflections

BY TONY REYNOLDS

It is safe to say we were all unprepared. But the church seemed to scramble more than most.

Though we had the advantage of an oft-performed ritual with an audience that mostly knew the script, we were left without a stage. We heard stories of some who, either ignorant or defiant of restrictions, ploughed on regardless, becoming Covid-19 super-spreaders: an Episcopal priest infecting 76 others as he administered the Eucharist and an enthusiastic choir where scores shared their love of divine music but

inhaled Covid-19 as an unintended subtext.

Our churches quickly slammed their doors, prioritizing liability over liturgy. We were urged to venture into cyberspace for spiritual nourishment. Speaking of our small parish mid-way up Vancouver Island (St. Peter, Comox), our first offerings were amateurish to say the least. Seeking a less distracting experience, some of us tuned into the cathedral in Victoria. Still pretty stilted and cold. Desperate, we turned to Canterbury to see what the primate of the Anglican Communion had to offer. We found him in

his kitchen, quaint but hardly worshipful.

With our diet of television and YouTube, we have become accustomed to slick. But slick is not what we seek in worship and it took some doing to create an experience without the trappings of our ecclesiastical stages.

But things improved. In our parish, thanks to the dedication and technical savvy of our people's warden, we soon had a Sunday service where we were moved to worship rather than wince. And it included many members of the parish reading lessons and leading prayers, often against the background scenes of our beautiful valley. And our rector quickly became comfortable with an up-close

delivery of the homily so that one followed her conviction and joy in what she was saying.

We have been able to track through Facebook the number of people who followed the services, some from as far away as Wales. Parishioners forwarded services to friends and family. We heard of people who now want to attend St Peter, having first been introduced through cyberspace. It seems it takes less courage to click on Facebook than walk through a church door.

But there are downsides to this experience that may haunt us for months or years to come. Convenience is no substitute for corporate worship. The electronic screen does not build community.

Relationships are a vital part of Christian life and the recurring pattern of weekly worship provides a structure that can keep them healthy and strong. In a time of much sorrow and uncertainty, many have been left bereft. We have been made keenly aware of how vital those relationships are and what a blessing it is to be able to worship collectively. And with all the injustice and privation this pandemic has uncovered in our otherwise complacent society, we need more than ever to be aware of God's expectation that we participate in the redemption of the world He so deeply loves. ■

Tony Reynolds is a council member and parishioner at St. Peter, Comox.



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Back at the cathedral

BY IAN MACLENNAN

Being able to receive the sacrament again was a wonderful experience this Sunday (July 12). Although distancing meant less physical connection with other people, there was still a sense of community which embraced us all, partially, I suppose, because we had all been missing the human contact that we have foregone over the past four months. I'm probably one of the few who wasn't bothered by the lack of hymns and congregational singing. I had a feeling of connection with the ages because the service appeared to be what might have happened before the Reformation (although in Latin, not English), no hymns during the

service, music by the choir and a strong focus on the altar. It allowed me to let the experience wash over me as I participated, and I felt a strengthening of spiritual life and commitment as I left the cathedral. ■

Ian MacleNNan is a parishioner at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria.

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RENEWED **PEOPLE**



Parishioner Ian MacleNNan heads the line-up to enter Christ Church Cathedral and nab one of the limited seats for reopening day July 12.

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White Jesus and me



BY CATHERINE PATE

This week, as I write this, another black man in the US has been shot (seven times in the back) by a white police officer. In the face of what is going on all around us, what we cannot do is pretend that this issue—racism—is not our problem to solve.

I grew up white. But I've been black my whole life. Born of an inter-racial couple in 1971 – an African American father (the great grandson of slaves) and a white Dutch/German Mennonite mother – I was adopted by Lynn and David Pate, both of whom are white. My father is an Anglican priest and so I grew up in this church, in a suburban, middle-class white neighbourhood in Winnipeg. Most of the time I was the only black child in my school, my church and in my community (my brother was one of two indigenous kids, so he had it much rougher than me). But my church community

was home to me. I sang in the choir, was a server, attended weekly youth group and was known (and loved) by just about everybody.

I don't have the privilege of living as a white person because I have enough melanin in my skin to appear "black." Because I am not "too black" I do have privileges afforded "light skinned blacks" that are not afforded to darker skinned ones. For example, I've always had compliments on my hair because of its tight corkscrew curls and not the less desirable African "afro" that gets described derogatorily as woolly or coarse. I believe my skin colour has been helpful (by which I mean it's not too dark) in job interviews & auditions, but that's not to say I didn't experience overt racism.

It really wasn't until I went to junior high school and met other black kids that I began to see the world I had been living in with a new perspective. Through my interactions with my black peers (there were three) and their black families, I began to see the world through black eyes for the first time. Suddenly, it all began to come into focus for

me: names I was called as a child, exclusion from birthday parties, sideways glances at me and my parents, and the time my dad and I were refused entry at the front door of a country club and told to enter at the rear, while the other kids from our choir performing there waltzed through the front doors with their parents. I had a name to put to it all: racism. I could no longer pretend that my experience in the world was the same as my white sister's.

Ask yourself, who is not here with us in this community of faith and what is it that might be preventing them from joining us?

What took longer for me to wrestle with was how the church I had grown up in, the church I loved, makes so many assumptions about its story, about what Christianity looks like and the world view by which it expresses itself—so many assumptions that are born from a British colonial mindset and perspective. We never,

for example, questioned why all the flannelgraph Bible characters had peach skin or why Jesus in the stained-glass windows has blond hair. I remember walking up for communion at a General Synod worship service in 1998 while the rest of the folks sang "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole, I want Thee forever to live in my soul; Break down every idol, cast out every foe; Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." I leaned over to my husband at the time (who is also white) and said, "I don't want to be washed whiter than snow."

It is hard to be "inclusive" when our language, our iconography, our music, our architecture, our programs, our leaders are all white, unless by "inclusive" we mean, you're welcome to join us, but you'll have to ignore all the whiteness or "assimilate" into it. So, what is a white church to do?

We don't have to go far to find the places where the white church can take definitive action on our baptismal call to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every person." Ask yourself, who is not here with us in this community of faith and what is it that

might be preventing them from joining us? Who holds the power and what perspectives are missing at the tables where decisions are made? What are we prepared to lose to make space for those perspectives to be heard? Where is the voice of God's justice missing in our neighbourhoods and communities? How can our church be that voice?

I will soon be the last "visible minority" in paid leadership in this diocese. I have travelled around the diocese (and the Anglican Church of Canada) enough to know that there are small pockets of people of colour, including indigenous brothers and sisters who worship and work with us in ministry. What is keeping so many of them away and why are they not finding their way into positions of leadership? Every parish is proud to say, "We are a welcoming church." And, in my experience, most people are very friendly to me when I arrive at the door.

I guess the question is, is that enough? ■

Catherine Pate is the director of communications for the diocese.