



**RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE**

**June 2022**

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# A new thing rising amidst grief

By Anna Greenwood-Lee



*As a diocese we are all experiencing the shifting realities of our lives in similar and distinct ways. Our past is marked with both stories of faithfulness and stories of sin. Our present is increasingly uncertain and we know there are difficult decisions to make. We see opportunities for new life, but know that means letting go of some of what has been. Nowhere are these truths felt more strongly than in Alert Bay.*

In mid-May I travelled to 'Yalis. Having previously been on the island last May, it was an honour and a privilege to be back on the island and to have time with the people of Christ Church, of 'Namgis Nation, and of Whe-la-la-U.

My visit started with a Sunday evening confirmation service in the church — the first confirmation on the island in a decade. It was a joyous intergenerational event with singing in both English and Kwak'wala.

Monday morning, I stood on the land on which St. Michael's Residential School once stood. It is now marked with a giant wooden orange t-shirt, about 20 feet high, on which is painted a poignant image of the school, skulls and a huge bird. The image is at once haunting and hopeful. I offered silent prayers before going to the Elders' centre for a potluck lunch with members of the parish. We discussed their sadness that Will Hubbard, incumbent at Christ Church, is leaving at the end of June and the uncertainty that their parish, like so many of our parishes, is facing. Monday afternoon, I also sat with

some of the staff of Whe-la-la-U. Whe-la-la-U is a collaborative agreement of four Kwakwa'ka'wakw tribes: Mamalilikāla, Ławitsis, Da'naxda'xw and K̓wik̓wasu'tinuxw. The word Whe-la-la-U was derived from the Kwak'wala word 'Wi'walsga'makw which means "All Tribes Together." They have a 12 acre "reserve within a reserve" on 'Yalis. They are not 'Namgis but from tribes that left their original lands to be closer to their children at St. Michael's or to services and housing that the government promised but never delivered.



*A giant wooden orange t-shirt marks the site of the former St. Michael's Residential School building, which was demolished in 2015. Photo by Anna Greenwood-Lee.*

On Tuesday I was joined by Elizabeth Northcott, archdeacon for the mid-north islands region, and by Brendon Neilson, vision animator. Along with Will Hubbard, we spent the day with residential school Survivors and two members of Whe-la-la-U, who are also members of the steering committee for the project looking for unmarked graves on the island. We discussed how anything that happens should be

Survivor-led. Children from over 45 nations were taken to the school and there is hope that at some time in the process there will be an opportunity for any Survivors who wish to attend to gather in the Big House. One Elder suggested that what we were envisioning was Nakistanakwala which is Kwak'wala for putting everything back into balance.

Tuesday afternoon, Elizabeth and I also had a short meeting with [Nawalakw](#), which is doing remarkable work on language and cultural revitalization, particularly with

youth. The diocese has made a small contribution towards a summer language immersion program for youth.

On Wednesday, we met with the Contextual Society. This is a ministry with a long tradition on the island that expresses a faith that is contextual to Kwakwa'ka'wakw culture. The society was formalized in 2016 and was granted funding for translation of Biblical materials into Kwak'wala. We met with members for a discussion of how the church can best support the community. As on my previous visit, the overwhelming concern of the Elders is for the youth of the island and the outstanding need for a youth centre and more services for youth. The idea emerged of using the rectory for a youth centre and community gathering space. Wednesday afternoon, this idea was discussed with members of the parish. One member's eyes lit up as he contemplated being able to teach the youth of the island traditional ways, such as how to gather seaweed and other traditional foods. Everyone agreed that the island certainly needed a youth centre. We also discussed possibilities for an ongoing pastoral presence on the island.

As the ferry pulled away from the island on Monday, Brendon and I talked about how much grief there is on the island. Grief at having lost so much of their traditional territory and way of life, grief at the loss of the salmon, grief at the loss of life at the residential school, grief at the broken families that the school left in its wake. Grief at how many youth suicides, drug toxicity deaths and other tragedies there have been on the island. Grief that the church is changing and there will soon no longer be a full-time priest on the island.

But the island is also full of remarkable people, full of tremendous hope, resilience and possibility. Over and over again we heard that the church is an important part of the community. Members of 'Namgis, Whe-la-la-U and the village of Alert Bay all spoke of how important the church is to them and the community. There was excitement about the new possibilities for working with community partners to better reach out to youth and to create an intergenerational gathering space.

As with most parish visits, I left with more questions than answers. I hold in my heart both the very real grief of the people of 'Yalis as well as the hope that a new thing is rising in our midst.

# Trans youth need our support

By Juli Mallett



*Pride flag. Photo by Quinn Dombrowski used under a CC BY-SA 2.0 license.*

The umbrella term “trans” (shortened from “transgender”) captures people with a range of experiences around gender identity, usually distilled down to something like this: people whose understanding of their personal gender identity, or whose social gender expression, do not match the social expectations of the sex assigned to them at birth. There is more that could be said about every aspect of that, the complications and nuances that umbrella terms always obscure, but it's a starting point. Another definition is more active and functional: trans people are those who *transition*: they go through some process of shifting how they live out their sense of gender identity, and the gender they express socially.

When we talk about transition as a society, we tend to get bogged down in the topic of medical transition, on the administration of hormones or hormone blockers, and surgical interventions, often from a place of prurient interest. The medical, however, is often a smaller (if nonetheless significant) portion of transition than the social: changes in daily clothing, the use of new gendered pronouns, the adoption of a new name. Those things follow a person every day of their life, and by their use or abrogation they accept or reject what they have shared of themselves with others.

This feeling of acceptance or rejection goes to the heart of

the person, and to their sense of belonging in community, which is profoundly significant. Researchers who study suicide say that while trans youth have long been known to have higher rates of suicide than their cisgender (that is, not trans) peers, this difference is nearly eliminated when trans youth experience a sense of acceptance and belonging in terms of their gender identity. Despair is not an inherent part of the trans experience, and the greatest despair comes simply from wanting to belong, and being rejected. The Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath told our Clergy Conference in Chemainus this May that feeling ignored or excluded in community has the same impact on the brain as being punched. Tell someone they don't belong, day in and day out, and the cumulative impact is unspeakably destructive.

I was invited to write about this topic because the unfortunate reality is that right now trans youth around the world, in our communities and in our churches, face a rising tide of societal opposition to their participation in community life and even their existence. We hear about laws being enacted in the United States which would subject children to physical inspections in order to play sports, and which charge parents with child abuse if they allow children to transition socially. We hear of teenagers in the United Kingdom facing nearly a decade of waiting just to be evaluated for medical care that would delay the effects of puberty, even as research shows that this is enormously beneficial for social and medical transition, and has minimal risks.

These are significant, regressive changes that make things harder for trans youth, and they come as part of a broader backlash against trans people more generally, framed in the rhetoric of culture wars. Although often cloaked as concern about the appropriateness of medical intervention in kids, the reality is that for most kids medical transition is fairly limited, and access to social transition is much more significant. Sometimes this concern is stated as being about the fact that a small number of people regret going through a process of transition, but no amount of gatekeeping or delaying will change that, and more regrets seem to stem from a lack of social acceptance than from a direct regret at having started down a path of transitioning socially or medically. As trans activists rightly point out, the rate of regret for hip and knee replacements is higher than for medical transition.

All of that might sound very abstract and far away, but it is a background against which the situation for trans youth here in our diocese must also be understood. My work in parish ministry, in mental health counselling and in volunteering with LGBTQ2SIA+ societies has frequently brought me into contact with trans youth, parents of trans youth and community advocates working with younger trans populations, and I can say that trans kids in our communities, and in our congregations, desperately need us to show up for them, and to create spaces for them.

There is so much that is world-leading about the resources that are available to trans kids in British Columbia, but there are signs of that broader backlash being felt here, too. Trans Care BC has provided guidelines and training for healthcare in British Columbia that are rooted in the best leading research, but there are scattered reports of medical providers increasingly blocking the path to care for trans youth, not on the basis of medical research, but because of sensationalist and fabricated social media talking points about an epidemic of children going through medical transition and then regretting it.

Schools across the province have robust anti-bullying policies and a sexual orientation and gender identity curriculum (SOGI 123), yet bullying of trans kids is too often accepted as an inevitability, and while most teachers keep up with the need to use preferred names and pronouns for trans students in the classroom, the few who deliberately refuse to do so send a clear message to these children that they do not belong, that they are not accepted. A small but influential number of advocates reach out to school district boards and advocate for the creation of an environment that is hostile to trans kids. Even here, adults take to social media to call for the exclusion of trans youth from sports in our communities.

It costs nothing to treat other people with respect and kindness, while the senses of belonging and acceptance these little gestures create are priceless, and life-saving. Wherever we can, we must work to support those who are trying to create hospitality, rather than hostility, and who want to see trans kids feeling like they belong and are loved, rather than that they are feared and rejected.

As Christian communities, we know the power of hospitality, of the importance of providing people with a space to feel welcomed. We make an effort to learn



people's names, and to help newcomers know that they belong to the body of Christ every bit as much as those who were there before them. We know that our differences give us our wholeness, and our ability to hear what God is revealing and how the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst.

Our tradition is full of stories about people who had new experiences, new revelations that shifted how they understood themselves, and new callings that made it impossible for them to keep living as they had lived before. So many of these stories involve the taking of new names and new roles in communities. We have the opportunity to be communities who practice hospitality for trans kids, and who don't get trapped in the polarizing world of opposites, scarcity and fear. We know that every person we encounter is an invitation to meet Christ in a new way. We can create spaces where people don't have to apologize for who they are, and how they came to be with us.

Indeed, we are equipped by our faith to accompany people in journeys of figuring out how it is they want to live in the first place, and who they really are. We can hold space for the kinds of conversion experiences that made Saul become Paul. We nurture the new life that made Abram Abraham, and Sarai Sarah. We can accompany people on the circuitous journey of figuring out where they are being called, even when their paths look more like Jonah's than like a direct line. Our faith recalls that every conversion experience is atypical, and every revelation, whether of God or of the human person, is particular and unique. The world longs to rush to find generalities and categories into which people can be fit, and to discard those whose existence would destabilize its sense of normalcy, but our faith is one of hospitality for the stranger, and loving curiosity about the circumstances of each person's life. Christ's ministry is characterized by how he sought to find out not how the world saw each person before him, but who they would reveal themselves to be when given the opportunity to do so. To encounter each person like that is a gift both for the stranger and ourselves.

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## A visit from Canterbury

By Ian Alexander



*The Archbishop of Canterbury (left) speaks to Tom Roberts (right), survivor of the Prince Albert Residential School. Photo by Anglican Video.*

### ***More that we might have feared; less that we might have hoped***

The recent visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Canada has predictably generated a wide range of reactions from Anglicans and others in this diocese and beyond. Many people (including Indigenous Anglican leaders I've spoken to) were moved by the obvious sincerity and profound depth of his three apologies in Saskatchewan and Toronto. Unlike the Pope, the Archbishop clearly understood and named the systemic nature of the abuses as much more than the actions of a few bad individuals, and something for which the institution as a whole must accept responsibility.

That the visit was able to go ahead at all is remarkable, in the context of the dark cloud over the Indigenous church caused by the sudden and tragic departure, just a few days earlier, of its first national archbishop. There were suggestions that some arrangements were hastily and clumsily handled (e.g., the cancelled plans to visit Six Nations — though this may have been an internal political squabble, as much as anything). It's too bad time constraints prevented Archbishop Welby from meeting more Indigenous people in more places; for instance, we would have liked him to come to BC, where First Nations culture is so distinctive from elsewhere in the country. Many people also wished (not without reason) that the

secular media had given more prominence to two previous apologies by Canadian primates.

At least those media outlets did seem to grasp, and convey, the rather subtle point that Justin Welby, while the spiritual leader (or, as some prefer to say, symbolic head) of some 85 million Anglicans around the world, and the “first among equals” of Anglican primates, is not “the Anglican pope,” and has no power to commit the Anglican Church of Canada, financially or otherwise.

Where both the media and the archbishop himself seem to have fallen short is in their shared silence about the efforts that have been made by Anglicans across Canada in recent years (including in this diocese) to engage deeply and sincerely in meaningful, tangible efforts towards truth-telling and healing. By doing so, they perpetuated the misrepresentation (or at least misunderstanding) characterized, for instance, by a recent opinion piece in our national newspaper, misleadingly headlined “Will the head of the Anglican Church finally bring restitution to Indigenous peoples?”

The fact is that, unlike some other denominations, we Anglicans *did* follow through on our financial commitments under the residential schools settlement agreement, to the tune of some 13 million dollars. Add to that another 8 million in grants through the Anglican Healing Fund, a further million-plus for Indigenous programs through PWRDF and the Anglican Foundation, and any number of local and diocesan projects — including right here on these Islands and Inlets.

Of course, no amount of financial restitution can ever fully compensate for the deep, permanent harm our church caused to Indigenous people and communities. Innumerable, genuine reconciliation initiatives are going on across our church, in a mutually open and generous spirit, not without pain and challenge on all sides, among both settlers and First Peoples, and with considerable commitment of human and financial resources.

Perhaps most notably, I saw and heard no reference, in any of the archbishop’s public statements or media interviews, nor in the coverage of his visit, to the massive commitment which the Anglican Church of Canada has made, and continues to make, to the nurturing and emergence of the self-determining Indigenous church

within the Anglican Church of Canada — what we are coming to know as “Sacred Circle.” The founding documents for that new entity (The Covenant and Our Way of Life) are just now being finalized.

These efforts build on much previous good work, such as the creation of a National Indigenous Archbishop, the establishment of the first Indigenous diocese (the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh) and the ordaining of nine First Nations, Inuit and Métis bishops and numerous Indigenous clergy, in both urban and rural settings. Also worth mentioning, among many other examples, is the creation of a jubilee commission to research and recommend proposals for substantial reparations through redistribution of money and property.

These are perhaps among the most productive steps we Anglicans of today can take on the road to reconciliation. It is a long and painstaking process that requires much patient listening on all sides. We are well on the way. The archbishop should have known all this and should have spoken of these things as positive developments, comparable to similar initiatives in other post-colonial parts of the Anglican communion, like Australia and New Zealand, among others. It is an important story that needs and deserves to be told.

Whether this missed opportunity was the result of a failure in briefing by Canadian church officials, or a failure by the Canterbury bureaucracy to listen, or both, we cannot know. Either way, it’s unfortunate. Nevertheless, we are glad he came.

# Why stay in the Church?

## On pursuing integrity not purity

By John J. Thatamanil



*Church doors and steps. Photo by Luke Peterson Photography used under a CC BY 2.0 license.*

As we become increasingly aware of the historical cruelty of Anglican, Catholic and other Canadian churches — the most recent papal apology serving as yet another important if overdue spotlight — participants in these churches are faced with the sharp questions: should I stay or should I go? Can I, in good conscience, remain invested in organizations with such troubling and violent legacies? It is hardly surprising that many either make the decision to leave or passively fade away. Neither decision can be faulted. Conscience must win out. As for myself, rather than leaving, I am, God willing, due to be ordained to the priesthood in a matter of days — surely a questionable decision in the eyes of many, especially now.

But, for me, the truly troubling and far-reaching question is whether there remain any institutions free of moral taint. Consider the inextricable ways that each of us is bound up with the nation-state and the neoliberal market — the former serving the latter — which are pillaging the planet and threatening the very possibility of organized human life. Remember also that Church and State acted together in the creation and maintenance of residential schools. Walking out of the Church but remaining Canadian does not resolve the ethical quandary or free us from moral culpability.

Short of living off the grid, there is no escape from morally compromised institutions. If we pay taxes, we at least tacitly assent if not consent to the practices of our nation-states and their violence. That said, pointing to widespread social wrongdoing cannot be the basis of an argument in favour of staying in churches. After all, churches are marked by a distinctive problem: they have violated the very ideals they claim to embody — ideals grounded in appeals to the Holy. It is this problem of spiritual self-contradiction that make ecclesial failures especially striking.

The nation-state and the market also make grandiose claims, and they too fail spectacularly. The trouble is that you cannot walk out of capitalism or the nation-state. They are, at least for now, unavoidable. Like Sartre's vision of hell, there's no exit. All we can do is exercise political agency to redirect these institutions in more just directions. Living inside these institutions means that we must recognize that the quest for moral purity is impractical and unrealizable.

Given our inextricable entanglement with compromised institutions, what are we to do? Specifically, absent spiritual communities, how are we to arrive at: 1) the rich and comprehensive vision for justice that is needed to redirect vast social structures, 2) the spiritual disciplines necessary to install that vision into our hearts and minds and 3) the collective communities of practice to move us from spiritual formation to community formation and ultimately to statecraft — to press our societies and economies in the direction of “the Beloved Community?” This is no individual DIY project. Something like a spiritual community seems unavoidable for those who seek to cultivate interconnected purposes. It need not be the Church, of course, but some such community seems indispensable.

Here we arrive at a conundrum: the more compelling, far-reaching and radical any community's vision happens to be, the more certain it is to fall far short of its own aspirations. Imagine a historical institution that seeks to live in the name of the radical, egalitarian, anti-imperial and table-turning love of Jesus of Nazareth! Or Buddhist communities that seek to follow the Noble Eightfold Path envisioned by Siddhartha Gautama! The grander the vision, the greater the fall.



We have arrived at a dead end: spiritual communities — you can't live with them and you can't live without them. What are we to do? The Church's approach to fallenness is a rigorous commitment to confession. Confession is integral to the liturgy of the Church. One does not get far into Anglican worship without a collective affirmation that we cannot worship in spirit and truth without being fitted to do so. Hence, the prayer,

*Almighty God,  
to you all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from you no secrets are hidden.  
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

But any theology that suggests that confession and absolution can be had without accountability and reparations is radically flawed. Spiritual communities, soberly aware of their inevitable falling short, must have structures of accountability in place to hold leaders and members to account for their failures. Spiritual communities cannot take the easy way out: we cannot be Pollyannaish and ask to be defined solely by our ideals rather than our fallible, flawed and fragmentary practices. We are *both* what we nobly aspire to be and what we concretely manage to actualize. A core insight of Martin Luther holds not just for persons but also institutions: *simul justus et peccator* — at once righteous yet also sinners.

Where then does that leave us? Walking out of the Church still leaves me entangled with compromised institutions and the ongoing toll they take on a whole host of bodies, marginalized bodies in particular. Walking out is a defensible moral choice, but not one that resolves core historical and present wrongs. Nor does aspiring to a DIY spirituality suffice for me. I am, of course, responsible for directing my own spiritual life, but I need the community of the Church to hold me accountable.

What then? I've decided that purity is impossible but integrity is not; that's true for both people and institutions. For Christians, both our ideals and our practices must be judged by the measure of the life and death of Jesus. Do

our personal and institutional lives strive for and aim at cruciform love and service? We will never fulfill that aspiration — our reach will always exceed our grasp — but we can, with integrity, commit ourselves to living and serving within an institution that has Christlike life as its holy goal. We will fall short, but I for one, cannot imagine a worthier ideal to which to give my life.

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## Cathedral looking to build for the future

By Naomi Racz



*The interior of Christ Church Cathedral showing the main altar.  
Photo courtesy of Ian Alexander.*

The current Christ Church Cathedral building is the third cathedral to have been built in Victoria. It was designed by J.C.M. Keith, who won an international competition in 1896. However, construction of the cathedral didn't begin until 1926, with the nave, narthex and baptistry completed by 1929. Work on the cathedral was then further delayed by the depression and Second World War. The western towers were completed in the 1950s and the reconstruction of the east end was completed in 1991.

However, two elements of the original design were never completed — a tower on what is now the east end and, where the cathedral car park now sits, an additional four bays that would have joined the cathedral to Memorial Hall.





*Sketch showing the original design for the cathedral, including the tower and four additional bays on the east end. Photo courtesy of Ian Alexander.*

It is within this context of an incomplete and, historically, ever-evolving cathedral precinct that the cathedral began, back in 2019, to consider the future of the precinct, which includes the block bounded by Quadra Street, Vancouver Street, Burdett Avenue and Rockland Avenue. The cathedral community, including parishioners, members of the cathedral school and the wider church, took part in a visioning process called “Greater Works than These,” after Jesus’ promise to the disciples that “the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

This process resulted in [ten aspirational statements](#) that are intended to guide decision making and which have laid a foundation for the current work that the cathedral community is undertaking, under the banner of “Building for the Future.” Building for the Future is a multi-phase project that involves re-envisioning what the cathedral can and should be into the next century.

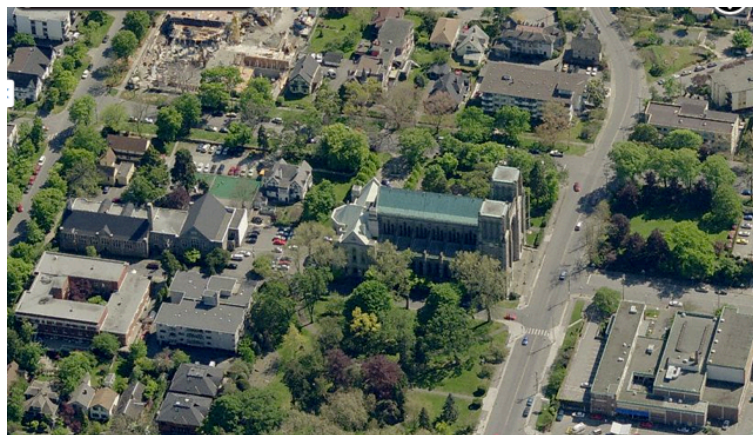
“It’s the cathedral’s aspiration to be more fully a diocesan cathedral and a diocesan resource,” says Ian Alexander, chair of the Building for the Future steering committee. “It’s about this vision of an Anglican centre for the islands and inlets of spirituality, but also of arts and culture, of learning and education, and of heritage. In a time of retrenchment and consolidation and reduction, this is an opportunity to build up something that all Anglicans in the diocese can feel belongs to them and that is a really strong physical presence and programmatic presence of Anglican

values in this part of the world.”

Phase 1 was a “planning for the plan” phase, in which the cathedral engaged planning consultancy firm Wiser Projects. Wiser Projects carried out a number of tasks during this phase, including reviewing the existing building survey, site plans, building drawings and floor plans; conducting stakeholder sessions with parishioners, the diocese and the school community; reviewing the City of Victoria’s development regulations; and reaching out to local developers. Wiser Projects also worked with Paul Rigby of international architecture firm FaulknerBrowns Architects to assess the current site and provide suggestions on how the site could be adapted and improved, in line with the values identified by the cathedral and the school.

During a Zoom presentation on phase 1 ([available on the cathedral website](#)), Paul Rigby outlined some of the opportunities that exist to make the cathedral a more flexible and accessible space, such as a portable altar and pews, and an elevator; and opportunities to add additional amenities to the cathedral, such as a café and toilets.

Paul also looked at the wider context of the cathedral and how it presents itself to the city, putting forward suggestions such as creating a public forecourt in front of the cathedral with priority given to pedestrians, and making the approach to the cathedral along Courtney Street more attractive by expanding the sidewalks and planting trees. However, at this point, these are simply ideas to show what might be possible and are not intended to reflect what will actually happen in and around the precinct.



*An aerial view showing the cathedral precinct. Photo courtesy of*

*Ian Alexander.*

“It’s not like it’s all brand new,” says Ian. “There are lots of things that are shortcomings with our current property and our current buildings. The interior of the cathedral just isn’t flexible with all those pews and the multi-level chancel. Every time you try to put on an event in there, the space is working against you.

“And the school needs to expand; it’s already moving towards a double cohort. The chorister program is really thriving now and is a huge draw, especially with cutbacks to music programs in the public schools. And we also want to increase synergies between the cathedral and the synod office in terms of shared administration, space and personnel.”

The school has already agreed to commit \$250,000 to the project and on Sunday, May 15, parishioners of Christ Church Cathedral took part in a special general meeting of the vestry to vote on two motions that would see the cathedral move to phase 2 of Building for the Future and would approve the cathedral to also contribute \$250,000 to phase 2. Both motions were approved. Diocesan council will discuss a similar commitment at its next meeting on June 2.

Phase 2 is when the “master plan” for the cathedral precinct will be developed and, in the second half of phase 2, initial designs for construction will be drawn up.

“We won’t do it all at once; it’ll happen over multiple decades,” says Ian. “But you can’t start unless you have a plan. And we won’t do it all ourselves; it’ll be done in partnerships. But if we can get this plan done, then we’ve really created a solid foundation for what might take decades to actually unfold.”

The cathedral website has a [Building for the Future page](#) on its website, with extensive information and updates about the project, including the full phase 1 report, and recordings of presentations and updates on the first and second phases.

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# Applying hospice philosophy to climate grief

By Roxy Humphrey

The church has an opportunity to help support people experiencing ecological distress.

Ecological distress refers to “any forms of emotional, psychological or existential distress related to present or anticipated ecological/climatic change.” It is a rapidly growing phenomenon impacting more and more people.

As Elin Kelsey, author of *Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We Think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis*, notes:

We lack any recognized infrastructure to support children, or adults, suffering from despair about the planetary crisis. It’s as if we are engaged in a mass movement of emotional denial.

## Hospice philosophy

This emotional denial Kelsey refers to exacerbates experiences of ecological distress. She introduces hospice philosophy and explains some of the parallels between the rise of hospice care in the face of existential crises and our present moment, with its turbulent ecological distresses.

She goes on to explain that, as a result of technological advances in the 1950s, more people were dying in hospitals rather than at home.

Death in the medical context was then viewed as a failure — where the focus was on extending one’s life as long as possible — and this contributed to more and more people’s lives being prolonged “beyond the point that many would argue was meaningful existence.”

It was at this point that hospice philosophy emerged as a helpful framework for people to navigate the existential crisis that emerged as a result of the prolonging of life and

avoidance of death. Kelsey suggests hospice philosophy might offer helpful insights when working with people experiencing ecological emotions who don't have the tools to deal with the doom and gloom projections of the future.

In light of rapid global and climatic change and more and more people facing an existential crisis related to the gloomy projections about the future, hospice philosophy offers a helpful paradigm for people to navigate the uncertainty of the future.

To be clear, hospice philosophy is about the end of life. However, some of the key tenets can offer help to those of us who experience ecological distress because life as we know it is changing.

Rather than therapy to soothe or heal these turbulent emotions — which is not even possible given the escalating nature of the crisis — perhaps what would be most helpful is strategies to support people in directing these emotions in productive ways. Key tenets from hospice philosophy offer such strategies.

### **End of life care**

As we look to hospice philosophy for guidance, it is useful to consider its emergence in the field of end-of-life care. Cicely Saunders began advocating for an alternative way of working alongside terminally ill patients in the early 1960s in the United Kingdom.

She criticized the “never-ending intensive treatment carried to the bitter end as patients suffered and became more helpless.” Instead, Saunders envisioned a form of care where listening was considered an essential act of care. It looked more like hospitality rather than treatment. She used the term “hospice” for this vision because it derived from the Latin *hospes*, which means both guest and host.

Saunders drew inspiration from the original hospices — Christian shelters that dotted the landscape of Europe, run by monasteries:

Given the primitive state of medical care and the difficulty of travel, strangers often straggled in, exhausted and sick. Those who recovered may have journeyed on, but many

drew their final breath in the care of the monks.

These “way stations for pilgrims” provided metaphorical fodder for Saunders to cast a vision for what might be modern day hospices.

In our current moment, it might be useful to consider ourselves as pilgrims, similar to the strangers who entered those initial hospices, because we are between two realities — life before climate change, and life after. It is this “in between” space which fosters existential distress, similar to what people nearing the end of life face, because the future is uncertain.

We can draw from hospice philosophy four key tenets which might help us navigate this “in between” time.

### **1. Hope is rooted in a sense of a meaningful present**

As Saunders articulated, hope can be rooted in a sense of a meaningful present, rather than a specific outcome in the future. This is a useful concept to draw on when experiencing ecological distress because many people undergoing distress, especially young people, are overwhelmed with gloomy projections of the future, rather than with their experience in the present moment.

This invites a sense of agency, as hope is a source of inspiration and movement within the present moment. Through fostering an awareness of the present moment, people navigating ecological distress might find a source of hope in the now, which might help them going into the future.

As Kaira Jewel Lingo says:

*It is especially tempting in times of transition and challenge to worry about what will happen in the future. This is precisely the moment we need to return to the present moment... because the future is made of this moment. If we take good care of this moment, even if it is very difficult, we are taking good care of the future.*

### **2. Comfort and safety**

Furthermore, as people face and lean into the often-overwhelming realities of climate change, the hospice tenets of comfort and safety are useful. People

experiencing the distressing realities of climate change need places of safety and comfort in which to relax so they can do the important work of navigating their emotions.

Comfort and safety can come in the form of a homey atmosphere in a therapy room, or be found in the beauty of a retreat centre.

Just as pain relief was incorporated into hospice care as a way to restore people as “social bodies,” so too do people navigating the isolating emotions of climate change need avenues in which to be relieved of their embodied sense of threat so that they can get in touch with their emotional, social and spiritual selves. This gives people the ability to “stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth.”

### **3. Existential openness towards death**

Open awareness of dying is essential in working with people with ecological distress, because the future is unknown, and the messages related to the changing climate make clear that the ecosystems that support us may become unlivable. As a result, helping people do the hard work of facing and accepting their own death — whenever that may be — is important.

Contemplating impermanence is not intended to make people feel depressed or anxious, but to help people feel more alive and in touch with life, “to appreciate its preciousness even more.”

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report stated that climate change has become a fact of modern life and many of its effects are irreversible. This means that we are living in a time of climate change and are no longer able to avoid it. While this might be something to grieve and lament — and accepting its reality is certainly hard — it might also not be the end of the story.

As anthropologist Donna Haraway notes:

*[What] comes after will not be like what came before. I think our job is to make [this period] as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge.*

The more readily we can openly address and talk about such a death, and work through the painful process of accepting this, the more readily we might foster the maturity needed to be able to envision and create such a replenishing epoch.

### **4. Holding the future with open hands**

This doesn't mean, however, that we simply encourage people to accept that all the impacts of climate change are a fact and cannot be avoided. Rather, as people are encouraged to face their own death and the impacts of climate change, holding a tension between death and life can foster a way to engage deeply in matters of concern.

It allows people to hold the future with open hands and not become overwhelmed or attached directly to the outcome, because there is a sense of hope beyond — or greater than — those particular results.

Looking to the soil as a guide in how to hold a tension in this is helpful, since what makes up the conditions of good soil is not simply living organisms but a balance between both decaying matter and living things.

It is exactly this combination of both death and life that creates good soil from which new life can emerge. This ability to hold a tension can be an anchoring place in which to hold steady in the midst of rapid changes.

### **What does this mean for the church?**

The church has an opportunity to resource people with these tools in navigating ecological distress because so many of the tenets of hospice philosophy are embedded within Christian theology and tradition.

What would it look like for the church to be a place that offered the wider world places of comfort, helping people to find meaning in this moment, embrace the reality of death and hold the future openly?

*This article is part of a series on the role of the Church in addressing climate grief. Read the first article in the series by Selinde Krayenhoff: [Holding space for climate grief](#)*

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# ‘Everything I know about God, I learned from dancing.’

By Christine Conkin



*Photo courtesy of Christine Conkin.*

“Everything I know about God, I learned from dancing.” This was the title of a major paper I wrote for my Master of Divinity at Vancouver School of Theology (VST). Writing the paper was an important moment for me

as it brought together my (then) recent theological studies with my earlier Christian formation.

I grew up attending an Anglican church in Calgary. St George was a “church plant” in a newly developing part of Calgary. My earliest memories of church are in a school gym, where I was baptized as a preschooler. I remember touring the building when it was under construction. I was sorry to miss the deconsecration several years ago when maintenance deferred for too long made the building uninhabitable. The building is gone, but I still have dear church friends in and from that community that formed and love me.

Through my teens and early adult years, I loved to dance and performed with a marching band all over southern Alberta and around the world. After undergrad, I worked at this and that while teaching and taking dance classes. I also found life in youth ministry leadership and other church leadership roles, from episcopal search to General Synod to Partners in Mission (the national church’s global connections). Between undergrad studies in sociology,

dance and church, my love for travel and connecting with people across cultures was nurtured and grew.

It was at a Christian dance conference held at (not by) VST where I was first inspired to write a book: “Everything I know about God, I learned from dancing.” By instinct, I was convinced that the forms of dance I taught there, coming out of a culture not my own and not typically considered “holy” — the music and dance I loved the most — was as sacred as anything else. “One day,” I thought, “I’m going to write a book about it.” I wanted to combine my three great loves: culture, art and spirituality. Having already spent much time with sociology and dance, I decided I needed to study theology. And so off I went to seminary.

I also wanted to study because in my late 20s, I finally admitted to myself (and then a few trusted friends), that I didn’t believe Christianity the way it had been taught to me. I couldn’t have named the theological questions any better than that at the time. Even with my questions, I remained convinced (often, anyway) that “there’s something to this Jesus stuff.” Discovering postmodernism, and a community of peers, kept me in the church. I had no idea that I’d spend most of my career trying to explain postmodern shifts to church folks, move the church through it, and on to whatever is emerging now.

My dancing body and soul always knew God was real. Becoming a sacrament through ordination made sense. Finding God with my head, through academic study, particularly of the Bible, was life-giving in truly incredible ways. My Master of Theology thesis, focused on Isaiah 56:1–8, has turned out to define much of my approach to pastoral ministry and church leadership. “What do you do when what was no longer exists and what is to be has not yet arrived?” If our ancient ancestors figured it out, so can we.

Many of my favourite church moments are when the ritual and liturgy itself are the sermon. There was that time we almost burned down VST’s chapel by creating a “lake of fire” in the (wooden!) font. And the time I convinced my dance teacher and a few classmates to turn a class exercise into a dance for church — it featured urban-influenced gospel music preaching against Satan.

I still love to dance, but now, mostly, my artistic expression is embodied through liturgy, often with the goal of bringing the Bible's stories to life. I mostly recharge outside — on a bike or skis or with running or hiking shoes on my feet. I still love to travel, and I still hope to write that book one day.

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## God loves a cheerful giver

By Sulin Milne

What on earth is a stewardship canvass?

That was the question I asked our wardens and treasurer after the new diocesan regulation, glamorously entitled “Regulation 6.10.05 – Parish Stewardship,” was circulated. None of us had ever done a stewardship canvass before, but together we worked out what it would look like — or rather what it would not look like. We decided from the beginning we would not be asking our parishioners for more money. Instead, our focus was to be on celebrating the continued generosity of our members, and to press into 2 Corinthians 9:7: “Each person should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

In order to renew joy, we asked people to make an honest review of their giving, whether of time, skills, money or possessions, and to make the adjustments, whether up or down, that would enable them to engage in stewardship with joy rather than duty; energy rather than exhaustion; hope rather than habit. We sought a recommitment to giving in all forms as a spiritual discipline that can draw us not only into joy but into a deeper relationship with God.

We chose Lent to run our campaign, a natural time to review our spiritual practice and press further into God. Each Sunday we looked at a different aspect of our life together and reflected on ways stewardship impacts and enhances them. Our areas of focus were:

**Community engagement:** Volunteering with our pastoral care, communications or outreach teams; donating to our

foodbank; or supporting our Blessings Boutique.

**God engagement:** Committing to attend and volunteer at worship services; engaging in personal and corporate prayer; studying the Bible; training for church roles; and giving financially to God and his church.

**Partners in Mission (PinM) engagement:** Supporting our monthly partners with prayer, money and action; joining a committee to review our practice (this is a new PinM model for St Peter); and choosing next year's PinM.

**Creation engagement:** reducing car use; engaging with St Peter green team initiatives; growing flowers for the sanctuary or vegetables for our food bank; and making a rule of life to help us tread more gently on the Earth.

**Future engagement:** supporting our youth whether by prayer, mentoring or attending youth-led worship; coming alongside wardens or Area-of-Interest council members as deputy or trainee; supporting church building and maintenance projects; and leaving a bequest to the church in a will.

During Holy Week, a pledge form was sent out. The form reflected the topics we had considered each Sunday through Lent. The form allowed parishioners to reflect, to intentionally and mindfully commit afresh to offering time, money, possessions and talents — everything God has given us — back to God through his Church.

If they were willing to do so, people were asked to share their pledges with the leadership. Twenty-five of them did (about 12%), enabling us to fulfill Part C of the regulation to “report the results of said canvass to the Executive Officer...” In some ways, this is only a small sample of our church family, but is an acceptable rate of response, given that this is a very personal matter for some and a typical response to any survey is around 5–30% of those canvassed.

Through the pledge form, we identified areas of training, engagement and growth. And although the intention was not to ask for increased dollar giving, many people did pledge to do that, and we also received a pledge of a lump sum to further the work of the church.

But did we renew ourselves as cheerful givers? Well, I hope so. I certainly enjoyed myself and look forward to doing it again next year.

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## Missing Lambeth but still building relationships

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

As we move towards the summer months, I have had a few questions about the Lambeth Conference that is taking place in the UK this summer. This is a decennial gathering of bishops and their spouses from across the Anglican Communion convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The first conference was in 1867. This year's July 26 to Aug. 8 conference expects to welcome about 600 bishops from the 185 countries that make up the Anglican Communion. All except the LGBTQ+ bishops have been invited to bring their spouses. That spouses are invited at all and that dioceses are expected to cover the costs of this confounds me and strikes me as antediluvian.

For a variety of reasons, I have discerned that I will not be attending the Lambeth Conference this summer. The history of this conference is complicated. At its best, it's one of the "instruments of communion," building relationships across the vast and diverse communion. At its worst, it has been a place where fractious debates about human sexuality have taken place.

Lambeth is not a governing body and has no authority over members of the communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury serves as the "first among equals" of Primates across the communion. However, over the years, Lambeth has passed various "resolutions." Most of them get little or no attention and the few that have, all dealing with matters of human sexuality, have resulted in conflict, disunity and harm. It has been decided that no resolutions will be passed at Lambeth 2022.

In preparation for the in-person meetings, there have been a few Zoom meetings where bishops have been invited to meet with other bishops from across the communion in

small groups. I took part in one of these and enjoyed the relationship building and collegiality. This would be the best part of the in-person meeting.

However, at this juncture in my episcopacy it is here in the diocese that I need to concentrate my time and our collective resources for relationship building. There is a fair bit of travel and relationship building that needs to be done within our own diocese. I plan to spend the summer continuing to travel up and down and across this beautiful diocese, building relationships of understanding and trust. Tara and I are working through the list of parishes and making sure I am scheduled to go to all the places I have not yet been in person. Over the summer months, I very much look forward to travelling, among other places, to Port Alberni, Denman Island and Gabriola. My colleagues in the House of Bishops who are attending Lambeth will pass on their learning and experiences, and while the time change is a challenge, I will also have the option of "Zooming" into some of the Lambeth sessions.

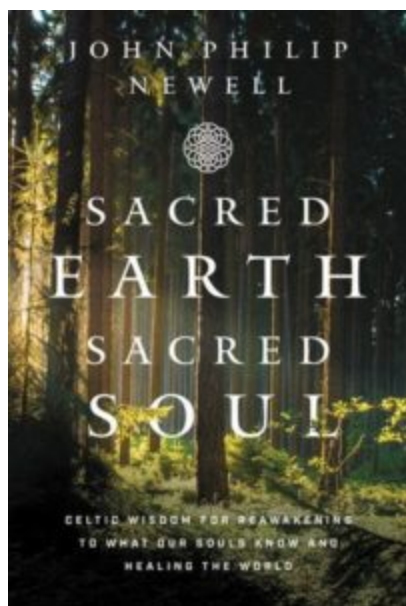
We are living in changing times. The importance of in-person meetings and relationship building must be balanced with fiscal realities and climate change. We also need to discover a truly post-colonial understanding of the Anglican Communion. I trust that, in the years and decades to come, God will help us discern new and more life-giving ways to live into our communion and unity.

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## Celtic teachers show us the divine in all matter

By Adela Torchia

***Book Review: Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul by John Philip Newell. New York, NY, HarperOne, 2021***



“We’re in for quite a stretching,” said an Irish midwife sister after hearing Newell speak in Dublin about the new thing that’s trying to come forth given the decline of traditional Christianity — what are the yearnings for new birth stirring in the human soul today? This new sense of the sacred is birthing a bigger understanding of the cosmic nature of God. As the Celtic tradition

has been saying all along: we cannot contain the sacred. Rather, as Newell writes, “we are to look for it everywhere, and we are to serve it and be liberators of it in one another and in the earth.”

At another talk that Newell gave in Ottawa, a Mohawk Elder who’d been invited to make observations afterwards, spoke of the “resonances between Celtic and Native wisdom.” With tears in his eyes, the Elder spoke of how much better off all Indigenous people in Canada would likely have been if this enlightened Celtic version of Christianity had prevailed, instead of being suppressed in favour of the imperialistic and hierarchical Roman version of Christianity. Indeed, the resonance between Celtic and Indigenous spiritualities has been increasingly recognized, given their long held common understanding of the sacredness of nature or creation — a perspective that holds substantial promise for the healing of our damaged planet.

After telling these and other stories in the book’s introduction, Newell goes on, through nine chapters, to highlight historical Celtic teachers and prophets as they resisted overly narrow ecclesiastical understandings of God in favour of a broader focus on the divine as inherent in all matter. Several of the chapters are updated versions of Newell’s 1997 book *Listening for the Heartbeat of God*, with new chapters added on Brigid of Kildare, John Muir, Teilhard de Chardin and Kenneth White. Both books begin with the Welsh Celtic monk called Pelagius, with his fivefold focus on the sacredness of the human

soul and of nature, spiritual practice, wisdom and compassion. The sacredness of compassion, for example, fuels the holy work of justice. In an insight still so relevant to our world today, Pelagius notes that “A person who is rich... and yet refuses to give food to the hungry may cause far more deaths than even the cruellest murderer.”

Newell’s second chapter focuses on the “Sacred Feminine” as featured in Brigid of Kildare, who is a liminal character holding together apparent opposites, including threshold times of transitions in our lives — like a shoreline these are liminal places between the known and the unknown. The Celtic prophets, teachers and mystics in this book are presented in chronological order, so 9th century Eriugena is next. Newell labels his thinking “Sacred Flow,” with God as “the flow of life deep in all things.”

The fourth chapter looks at the biggest collection of recovered Celtic sources called the *Carmina Gadelica*, whose words, Newell says “further awaken us to a spiritual vision of the intimacy of spirit and matter, nature and grace.” The subject of Newell’s doctorate, Alexander John Scott, is the focus of chapter five. Scott believed that “A thread of the divine is woven through the fabric of the human soul and of everything that has being.” Because everything is interconnected, Scott also worked on various justice issues, like helping to establish more opportunities for women’s higher education in 19th century Britain.

The remaining chapters focus on 19th and 20th century thinkers, starting in chapter six with the great American naturalist John Muir, who although not geographically Celtic, displayed a rich Celtic perspective recognizing the sacredness of Earth as part of ecological awareness and action. My biggest surprise and delight upon first seeing the table of contents was the chapter focused on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who was a Jesuit priest, scientist and paleontologist — I’ve never seen his name mentioned in a book on Celtic Christianity before. Like many other Earth-loving prophets before him, Teilhard was extensively silenced by the church during his lifetime since he “refuses the divorce between spirit and matter.” At the heart of matter, Teilhard always found the heart of God.

Chapter eight is devoted to Kenneth White, professor of



modern poetry at the Sorbonne University in Paris: “[T]o awaken to the sacred in all things is to embark on a pilgrimage into the unknown.” As we set sail, White teaches us about letting go of the old, so as to make space for the new. And finally, chapter nine is focused on George MacLeod, who lived the way of nonviolent compassion, and rebuilt the abbey on the island of Iona. “Matter matters” was a fond saying of MacLeod’s and has become a mantra of Celtic Christian focus on ecological concerns.

After such a wide range of people presented in their different contexts, it’s good to observe the beginnings of each chapter title as a flow: Sacred Soul, Sacred Feminine, Sacred Flow, Sacred Song, Sacred Imagination, Sacred Earth, Sacred Matter, Sacred Compassion and Sacred Journey. Sadly, Christianity has often been hijacked by dualistic thinking, with its artificial bifurcation between the sacred and the so-called “profane” or matter. I’m among many who’ve often felt a deep and nourishing resonance between the Creator and the creation, between nature and grace and between spirit and matter. Newell’s new book provides ongoing evidence of both the deep roots of such an approach, as well as its essential place in a Christianity focused on a healthier and more peaceful planet for all.

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## The prie-dieu

By Herbert O’Driscoll



*Photo by pouchin used under a CC BY-NC 2.0 license.*

The antique shop was large. I found myself in it only because my family was in a nearby store, and, since I’m

not much of a shopper, I was just putting in time.

Near the back, standing half hidden between other elderly pieces of furniture, I saw it. It was among those pieces that were not expected to raise a great price, so it was not presented attractively. I noticed some dust and some marks here and there. It was what was once called a prie-dieu, a simple padded wooden kneeler with a front rail on which to lean as one knelt.

Prie-dieu means “pray (to) God.” This simple piece of furniture would have come from a small church or chapel, perhaps even a confession booth. Its placement here in this antique store seemed to communicate a sad irony.

Many in our society would consider all that this old confessional prie-dieu stands for as passé. Who needs, they might say, to kneel in childish dependence, to whisper our self-doubts, guilts and fears to a faraway and even debatable God? After all, we are mature, modern, 21st century people!

The ironic thing, however, is that in our society, millions of people hunger for a relationship in which they can share those same timeless self-doubts, guilts and anxieties. Sometimes we turn to the large army of professional listeners we have recruited: counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists and therapists of many kinds. We carry out in the comfort of their offices what countless people did on this old prayer kneeler. They called it confessing their sins. However, we now feel such language is moralistic, even judgmental. We have other language. In the long-ago final decades of the last century, we called it “letting it all hang out.” In the early decades of this century, we call it “telling my story.” Or, to use a slightly more comfortably distancing phrase, “seeing my therapist.” But no matter the language, the fact remains that it is, and always will be, our confession.

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# O'Driscoll Forum fundraiser launched

By Naomi Racz



*Herb and Paula O'Driscoll, in whose honour the O'Driscoll Forum is being established. Photo courtesy of Ian Alexander.*

Readers of *Faith Tides* will be familiar with the name Herbert O'Driscoll. Herb, as he's known, has been writing a regular column for *Faith Tides* for some time now and his words are always thought-provoking and insightful — as are his many published books.

Herb was born in Ireland and was ordained in 1954. During his long career, he worked as a parish priest, naval chaplain and cathedral dean across Canada, before retiring to the diocese of Islands and Inlets. Herb's wife, Paula O'Driscoll, is a lifelong soloist and chorister, and a visual artist who continues to create works on canvas and with fabric.

Now, Herb and Paula are putting their name to a new initiative at the Vancouver School of Theology. The O'Driscoll Forum will be an annual three-day event held as part of the Vancouver School of Theology's Summer School. The Forum will include a series of lectures with a focus on preaching, teaching and liturgical arts. But it promises to be more than "just another lecture series." The program will also include a master class component, and each day participants will have the opportunity to practice preaching and creativity with guidance from experts.

In order to ensure the O'Driscoll Forum is a lasting legacy, the VST aims to create a permanent endowment,

which requires around \$300,000 to establish. With "quiet" fundraising among donors, around two-thirds of this amount has already been secured.

On May 31, the public portion of the fundraising campaign was launched with an online event featuring a reading by Herb, reminiscences from old friends of the couple, and a talk from Richard Topping, president of VST, about the school's plans for the O'Driscoll Forum.

For more information about the O'Driscoll Forum and to make a donation, visit the [VST website](#).

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## Leading the liturgy of the word: a lay leadership in worship course

By Ingrid Andersen

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

**"Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?" We answer, "I will, with God's help."**

If your parish is often or occasionally without clergy and you are a lay leader who would be able and willing to lead in services, you are invited to approach your wardens or clergy about being nominated by the bishop to attend an upcoming seven-week course. Upon successful completion of the course, a conversation will be held about how and when you might help lead services of the

word in your parish.

The Diocese of Islands and Inlets is presenting a seven-part course from mid-September to mid-November 2022 designed to equip lay leaders. The course will provide the skills and resources for laity to lead worship services, morning and evening prayer and the liturgy of the word (a church service without the Eucharist).

The seven sessions will equip lay leaders to:

- Understand the purpose of liturgy
- Follow the lectionary and examine its purpose in worship/liturgical formation
- Understand our Anglican, geographical, social and historical context
- Become familiar with the broad principals and structure of the BCP and the BAS
- Pray creatively and prepare intercessory prayers
- Access the available liturgical, lectionary, prayer and sermon resources needed to plan and lead a worship service.

**Dates, time and location:** Via Zoom, Thursdays, 7 p.m., Sept. 22, Sept. 29, Oct. 13, Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 3 and Nov. 10

**Required reading:** *The Liturgical Year: the spiraling adventure of the spiritual life* by Joan Chittister (2009, from the Ancient Practices Series)

**Registration:** Participants should contact their warden, priest or archdeacon to express interest in this course.

In partnership with Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee, this course is brought to you by:

**Ingrid Andersen, incumbent at Church of the Advent, Colwood, Diocese of Islands and Inlets (BC)**



Ingrid's role is to offer leadership with the design and content of this course and assist with discerning and scheduling session leaders. An Anglican priest for eighteen years in post-apartheid South Africa, Ingrid has a Master of Adult Education

and is engaged in her Doctor of Adult Education studies at Penn State University. Her research focus is on building the capacity of lay and ordained church leadership to respond appropriately to parish teaching and learning needs. She has developed and taught courses in church growth, small group/home church lay leadership and lay worship skills training for the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. She has a special focus on human rights, social justice, community development, peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation.

**Donna Joy, retired parish priest, Diocese of Rupert's Land**



Donna's role is to help with the design and content of this course. Donna has participated in parish, diocesan and national church leadership roles initially as a lay person, and since she became ordained in 1990.

Ongoing lifelong learning has remained a priority for her, with a particular focus on equipping lay leaders to plan and lead worship. In addition to this, she is passionate about collaborative leadership and ministry models, conflict management and children's religious formation. Recently she has been exploring these topics at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, MO.

# We Together: a chance to be together again

By Brendon Neilson

## WE TOGETHER DIOCESAN CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 1, 2022

### SAVE THE DATE

We Together, our semi-annual diocesan conference is fast approaching and will be held at St Paul, Nanaimo from Friday, Sept. 30 to Saturday, Oct. 1. It has been a long couple of years without diocesan-wide in-person gatherings, and we invite you to join us for an inspiring and hope-filled couple of days.

The theme of this year's conference will be "Here in This Place." We will be looking at the particular context we find ourselves in here in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets. We will begin our time together with a banquet on Friday night. It will be a time to remember one another and celebrate being in each other's presence. Bishop Anna will open our time with a reflection on how we are called to be God's people here on these islands and inlets, a particular piece of God's creation unlike any other, with its own beauty, its own complicated history and its own changing demographics and realities. We are called as church to be God's Church in this place, in this time — a time and place like no other. What is God birthing in our midst that we are called to pay attention to and midwife?

Two keynote addresses will bring us into greater understanding of what being God's people in these islands and inlets entails. Jillian Harris is a knowledge holder, Elder and former Chief of the Penelakut Tribe. She studied at Vancouver School of Theology and is a traditional funeral worker in her community. You can read

a little bit more about her in [this Anglican Journal article](#). She will invite us to remember the earliest Church of England missions here on these islands and inlets, and what they might mean for us now. We will consider this part of our history, which is tied up with the story of colonialism, and yet contains stories of faithfulness as well. Jillian sometimes refers to herself as a "reverse missionary" and we welcome her ministry to us in this spirit.

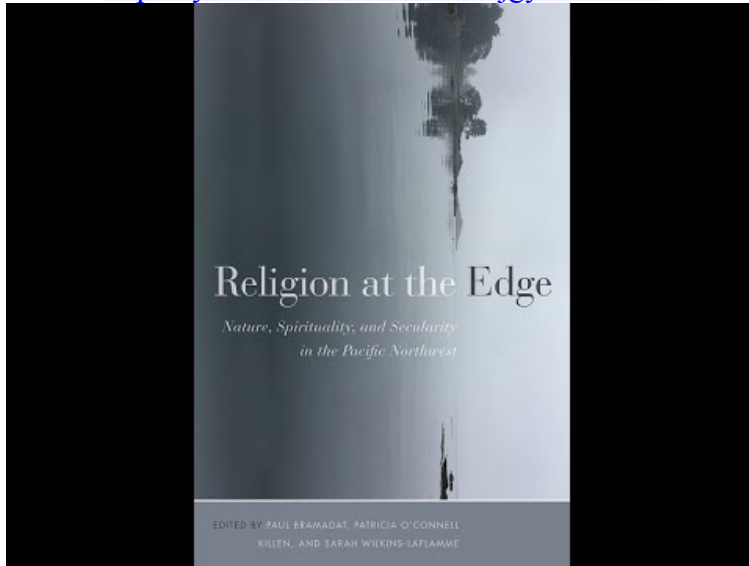
The other keynote speaker will be Rachel Brown. Rachel is the program coordinator at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. She is a religious studies scholar who has had an integral role in the project that has culminated in the publication of *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest* (UBC Press 2022). This work is a collection of essays produced as a result of a multi-disciplinary collaborative research project on the social-spiritual context of Cascadia (the bioregion that spans BC, Washington and Oregon). This is a region that now has more people who identify as having no religious affiliation than all those who are religiously affiliated combined. This level of secularity combines with what Paul Bramadat calls "reverential naturalism" (which speaks to a prevailing disposition to the natural world), making Cascadia a fascinating place in terms of religion. You can watch a short intro to the project here:





## Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=ljgy5Cx5fXo>



Rachel will highlight some of the key observations of the project and their implications for us, and help us form a better understanding of the social and spiritual context in which we are called to serve.

There will be small group discussions after each keynote to make meaning with each other. We will end our time with the celebration of the Eucharist and a closing sermon by John Thatamanil, our diocesan theologian. John is a comparative theologian and professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary. He is scheduled to be ordained a priest in our diocese a couple days after this issue of *Faith Tides* has been published. John will reflect on our time together and send us back into our places with a renewed sense of what it means to be *here in this place*.

Registration information is available [on the website](#). We highly anticipate this life-giving gathering after what has been a long time since we have been together in person.