FaithTides

RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

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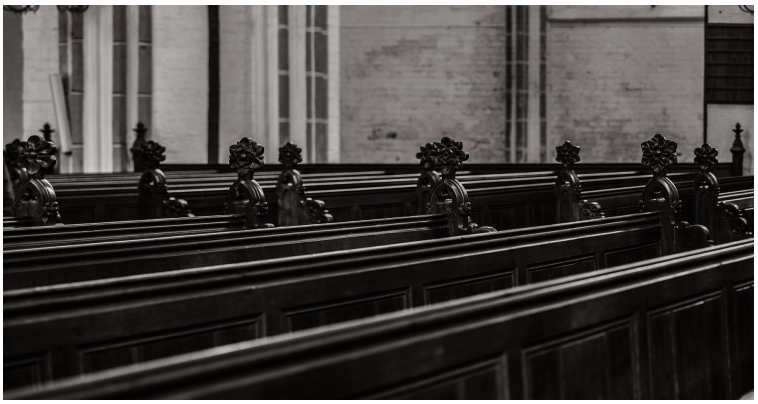
Empty pews and self-emptying

By Anna Greenwood-Lee



Church pews by x1kilma. Used under a CC BY-ND 2.0 license.

In 2021, Russell Daye and Robert Fennell published *Turning Ourselves Inside Out: Thriving Christian Communities*. Having researched thriving mainline Christian communities in Canada, the thesis of the book is that in order to thrive, parishes and the people in them must have:

- open hearts and minds
- a willingness to risk
- a sense of identity
- a willingness to be self-emptied

As far as I am aware, this book is the only recently published Canadian-focused book that examines thriving Canadian churches, and its findings are worth considering here in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets.

I invite parishes to think about how these four characteristics could be lived out in their own contexts.

- In what ways are we called to have open hearts and minds so as to see what God is doing in our midst and how we are called to join in?
- What risks do we need to take in order to learn from the future as it emerges?
- Who are we as God's people in this particular time and place and what is God calling us to experience or achieve?
- In what ways are we called to be self-emptied; to enter *kenosis*?

This last point, of being self-emptied, is perhaps the most challenging for us. It's important to remember that kenosis is not an end in itself. The self-emptying is important because it makes space for something else to appear. In their book, Daye and Fennell dare us to see that God might be up to something in the emptying of churches we are seeing all around us:

"For a half century, there has been a progressive emptying of the mainline church. It is time to accept that God is present in the emptying. After herculean efforts to stem the flow, after decades of denial, after countless attempts to entice the populace back into our temples, after innumerable programmatic reforms, it is time to take seriously the possibility that God desires this great emptying. It is time to ask if there isn't something sacred about the deep humbling of the liberal church. It is time to consider the possibility that this is a kenosis, a self-emptying for the good of others."

Daye and Fennell suggest that the work of the next years will be to "get the church out of the building" and

into the community. We can no longer just expect people to come and find us, we must be willing to go out and meet people where they are at, to serve the needs of the world, in the world. To trust that "God is in the encounter."

My message to all the churches that are worrying about empty pews is that this is a call not to try and fill the pews, but to go out into the world and meet the people where they are. Jesus never told us to build churches, put up signs and then patiently wait for the people to come to us. No, Jesus told us to go out in the world to love and serve our neighbours. Our Sunday worship is not an end in itself so much as a commissioning to go into the world as God's people to join in with God's work.

Remembering nature as the place of God

By John J. Thatamanil

"Natures Winter Bouquet" by Chris Breeze. Used under a CC BY 2.0 license.

The following sermon was delivered at the diocesan We Together conference, which took place in Nanaimo on Sept. 30–Oct. 1. You can watch this sermon and the key note speeches from the conference on the diocesan website.

Now, let me begin with a bit of a warning, a little truth in advertising. This may be among the weirdest sermons you have ever heard. In fact, you might well wonder if it is a sermon at all. You might even say, "This sure sounds like a lecture to me." Well, what did you expect? I have been a professor for 24 years; I've been a priest for just under three months. So, sue me.

I begin with a question: *Where is* God? Where is God located? Does God have an address? Is the question even a good one? For Christians, truth be told, the question is a strange and uncomfortable one. For a host of reasons, we Christians prefer the question, "*When* is God?" The when question is easier for us. We can point to the God of Exodus, God made flesh in Jesus, and the God who is yet to come. For Christian imagination, God is a God of time and history but not place. That is why the *where* question is trickier. Why have Christians been so bad about thinking about God and place? A huge question but let me offer a partial starter answer.

About four centuries ago, elite Western European Christians began to think of nature as mechanism and not organism. The whole world was imagined to be an intricately structured machine — every part working together in precise mathematical harmony. A whole host of figures were responsible for inaugurating us into this way of imagining the world. Galileo, René Descartes and Sir Isaac Newton among others. Now, I am well aware that the mere mention of these figures is likely to generate post high school PTSD in this room

full of people who are inclined toward the humanities, we folks for whom the mere mention of the word "calculus" can cause us to break out into a cold sweat. But bear with me. I promise that there will be no mathematical equations in this lecture, I mean sermon.

The remarkable intellectual powers of these figures cannot be exaggerated. But what they are known for — especially when taken together — is that they have bequeathed to us a way of seeing the world as tightly ordered mechanism rather than living organism. Their work in mathematics and natural science generated enormous capacities for prediction and control. Newton's brilliant work on force and gravity gave human beings unprecedented control over the natural world, and this control played a decisive role in shaping the modern world.

What they gave to us was a way of imagining reality as akin to a billiard ball table. Reality is made up of particles that are like billiard balls. Each stands independent of the other and acts on the other from the outside. Everything in the universe operates by strictly deterministic efficient causation. Descartes and Newton made their contributions in the 17th century, and by the early 19th century, William Paley was characterizing the universe as akin to a watch or a clock. His argument for the existence of God is probably familiar to you even if you haven't heard his name. It goes like this.

Paley asks us to imagine the following scenario. Suppose you are out walking in the woods, and you come across a watch lying on the ground — imagine for a moment that you don't know what a watch is — and pick it up and consider its precise design and the intricacy of its operations; you would soon conclude that someone must have manufactured it. From the existence and design of the watch, you would infer the existence of a watchmaker, a designer. Paley argued that the same argument must be made about the world, which is, after all, far more complex than a watch. Hence, there must be a watchmaker God, a God who made this machine-like world.

Now, let me ask you a foolish sounding question. Where is the watchmaker relative to the watch? Is the watchmaker inside the watch? Well, the watchmaker's *genius* might be found in the watch, but not the watchmaker's *presence*. The watchmaker is not *in* the watch. The watchmaker gets the watch going but then, here's the catch: the watchmaker becomes surplus to requirements. If the watch is well made, it can run indefinitely on its own steam. Given the divine genius, likewise, the world too can run on its own steam indefinitely. God is at the beginning making the watch-like world and initiating the world's operations, but God is no longer needed to keep the world going. And, most importantly, God is not in the universe God has created. So, we've answered the where question: God is outside the world God has made.

Is it any wonder then that it is precisely during this historical epoch in the West that God goes missing, that God goes on an extended sabbatical and is rarely if ever heard from again? The minute we begin to imagine nature as stripped of the sacred, that is the very minute that the West begins to lose track of God. Now, I don't want to place all the blame for God's disappearance on Descartes and especially Newton. History is never so neat, but their work did serve to underwrite the modern western worldview. The philosopher Akeel Bilgrami describes that worldview concisely as follows: "an exiled and distant God ruling over a brute and material and inert universe." *An exiled*

and distant God ruling over a brute and material and inert universe — what a telling phrase! And, while Newton cannot bear all the blame for this view of the world, my friend Akeel Bilgrami reminds us that, "Newton, in his *Opticks* had called nature and matter "stupid."

What is the legacy of Newton and his successors? Well, Bilgrami puts it this way: "The Royal Society's Newtonian ideologues insisted, the universe was set and kept in motion by a push from an *external* and providential God, not a God that was immanent in the world, sacralizing it from within and providing for an *inner* source of dynamism responsible for motion."

Now, how and why did this way of viewing the world catch on? Who stood to gain from seeing the world this way? Again, Bilgrami helps us to understand this. Once the world was stripped of any properties that might be considered sacred or supernatural, then what was left could be reduced to mere natural resources. As Bilgrami puts it, "as a result of stripping nature of such properties, it could now be stripped without qualm for extraction and gain as well, since it lacked any sacral constraints on such extraction." Here again is Bilgrami:

"…worldly alliances were very self-consciously forged between scientific organizations, commercial interests, and the latitudinarian Anglican establishment. Newton and Boyle along with Samuel Clarke, Richard Bentley, and others constructed, through fora such as the Boyle lectures at the Royal Society, an explicit agenda that articulated a systematic carte blanche for extractive economies involving deforestation, mining, and the setting up of plantation agriculture, what we today call "agribusiness." …the systematic adoption of enclosures and these other forms of extraction entrenched itself in this period, when the declaration that one may now take with impunity from nature's bounty was deliberately fortified in these worldly alliances of commercial interests with scientific bodies and the Protestant establishment…."

Our Anglican predecessors stood on the side of these scientific and commercial interests. Not all, mind you. The story of Anglicanism as Bishop Anna reminded us yesterday is complex, messy and never straightforward. Now, if you were paying attention to the dates I just mentioned — the 17th–19th centuries, you will have surely noticed that they overlap with the dates that Bishop Anna mentioned. The dates of the emergence of the modern scientific world view that reduced nature to nothing but natural resources perfectly overlap with the period of colonial contact, violence against First Nations and extraction.

A people who had come to see nature as a well-ordered machine encountered a people who regarded nature as a vital living organism infused with the Great Spirit.

A people who believed that human beings had no innate and organic relationship with land encountered a people who held that human beings cannot be separated from the land, that people, land and animals live in intimate and inseparable relation.

A people who only recently had begun to take shared land, the commons, and turn them into private property encountered a people who believe that the land cannot be owned, a people who insisted that we belong to the land and not the other way around.

A people who worshipped an exiled and distant God ruling over a brute and material and inert universe met a people who worshipped an immanent and all-

pervasive God present in every tree, every rock and every bush. Is it any wonder then that colonizers came to regard the people of this land as pagan, primitive, magical and superstitious?

Sadly, the story of institutional Anglicanism is a story of collaborating with the material interests who stood to gain by reducing sacred nature to nothing more than natural resources. In recent centuries, Anglicans have become a people who no longer know how to dream dreams or have visions. Lacking the power to dream, we are unable to see and to confess with Jacob, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

The Lord is in this place, and we are not aware of it. So, we clearcut and develop and invest in monocrop industrial agriculture and degrade the soils and poison the waters and overfish the oceans. Why? Because we have forgotten that "Surely the Lord is in this place, and we are not aware of it."

Caught up in the myth of whiteness and of cultural and racial superiority, we did not listen to our Indigenous siblings when they tried to tell us, "Listen, dear friends, the Lord is in this place, and you are not aware of it!"

Now, smoke from forest fires shrouds our skies, flood waters from hurricanes ravage our coasts, our young people plead for us to leave them a habitable world for their children and their children's children; their voices cry out to us, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and you are not aware of it."

Whether we call it "reverential naturalism," or presence of God in whom we live and move and have our being or the hallowed presence of the Great Spirit, some among us are beginning to dream and to see, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and we were not aware of it."

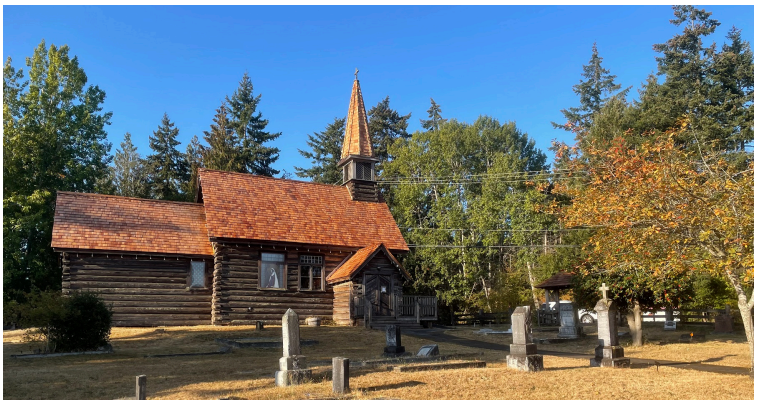
Is it too late for us to dream again, to see angels ascending and descending on this very land? Have we Christians lost the capacity to see nature, trees and all our animal companions as full of divine presence? Have we forgotten that the Lord is not only in this place but also in us? Will Christians live and die in a great cosmic loneliness, thinking ourselves to be the only spirit-filled creatures in an otherwise God-forsaken machine-like universe?

I do not believe it is too late for us! As Bishop Anna told us, God is doing a new thing! As Rachel Brown told us, there are now countless many in BC who may not speak of the Lord but who can testify to the presence of the sacred in nature. And, oh how long Jillian Harris's people have been telling us that we have lost our way, that we have forgotten our own traditions, that we have forgotten how to dream like Jacob did. They have been telling us, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and we were not aware of it!" The future of BC, indeed our planetary future, depends on whether we will listen.

Holy One, whose presence and power pervades all things, teach us once more to dream like your servant Jacob. Teach us once more to recognize your presence in this very place! Amen!

Under the orange roof: of raccoons and reconciliation

By Andrew Twiddy



St Anne, Parksville, log church, with new roof. Photo by Andrew Twiddy.

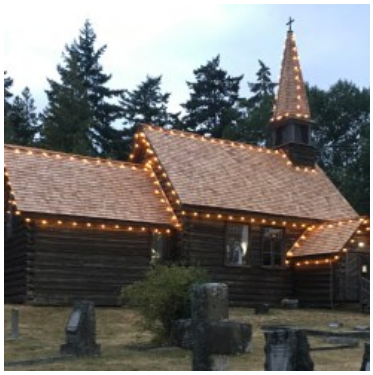
In 2019, St Anne & St Edmund, Parksville celebrated its 125th anniversary. On the list of projects for our anniversary was the renewal of our cedar shake roof at our iconic St Anne site, the oldest public building in the city, and the island's oldest log church.

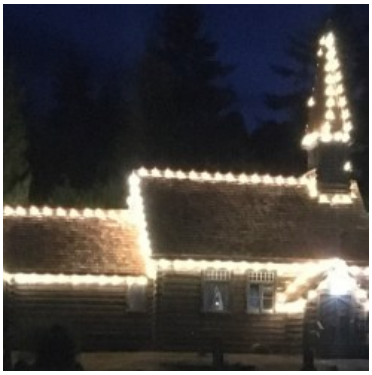
This summer we launched a campaign titled "Raising the Roof," to raise the funds to renew the roof — the name was riffed from the Vancouver Cathedral roof campaign. The work on the roof was completed in September. But the project was about more than just the roof itself. It was, and is, about the programs and people and ministry that happen under the roof, and all around the vicinity of the church and beyond.

A roof is so much more than a roof.

The building, in its West Coast gothic beauty, is the outward and visibly acknowledged sign, reverenced sacramentally with a genuflection of the eyelids and a nod and a smile of the passers-by. The inward and invisible grace is under and all around the beautified combination of new and old, in the stories of lives touched and changed, inspired for transformation, and strengthened for faith and service.

By day, the natural fresh yellow-orange colour of the cedar shingles enhances St Anne. As the day declines, bright and low-energy LED lights outline the building. The lights turn from an orange glow at twilight to brilliant white at nighttime (think the accentuation of the Parliament buildings in Victoria). The roof is our public statement of our acceptance of the need to shine a light on the shingle-by-shingle work of reconciliation, and of our commitment as the Anglican Church of Canada to the task.





We honour the fact that our community gathers on the traditional lands of the Pentlatch- and Hul'qumi'num-speaking peoples, forebears of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations.

In true Anglican middle-ground style, the first wedding at St Anne in 1896 was between a Coast Salish widow, Sarah Coqulamat, and Qualicum Beach's first settler, Irish Catholic Thomas Kinkade, and was

conducted by the first Anglican priest for the parish, Charles Cooper. Perhaps part of the beauty of having cedar logs from the 1890s and local cedar shakes hand cut for the 2020s, is that we can continue to marry and connect a sacred symbol to a sacred symbol, the medicinal tree of our ancestors on the land and watersheds where we live, and the medicine of a message of transformation for a country in need of truth telling and reconciliation.

How did we get to the completion of our new roof? Giving matters, and good ministry matters, and we need to keep talking to each other about it. "Raising the Roof" is one key initiative in a whole range of program and enhancement projects in which we will be engaged over a ten-year period (2019–2029). In total, we aim to raise $1,250,000 to finance these projects, and we are currently at the $500,000 mark.

In all of our institutional fragility, we Anglicans know that we depend fully on our communities, on public philanthropy and generosity, and on extraordinary acts of resolve and generosity from friends and members alike, including bequests and planned giving instruments. We are so tremendously grateful for all our donors, near and far, and for all our donations at every level of giving. Who knows what sacrifices lie behind these gifts?

No tale of the St Anne roof would be complete without the contributions of our winged and four-legged friends and wild creatures. We have co-existed comfortably for many years with nesting birds chirping and cheeping away during prayers now and again, living out the vocation given to them by the psalmist, to find a home above the altars of the Holy One (Psalm 84).

I imagine the diary of many country priests could also encompass church mice and bats in the belfry within the routine and rhythm of accumulated stories, but I never imagined that one day I would be making a record of bears in the churchyard, or raccoons in the rafters. The bears simply pass through on a rare occasion, but the raccoons are another matter, and it is to them that we owe a more urgent motivation for our newly roofed estate.

It was a summer Sunday morning when I came to notice that the clumping of footsteps above me in the attic was much more than a mouse. Our friends the raccoons had begun ripping off our aging and paper-thin roof shakes, to set about the task of nesting. I little realized, however, that our choir practice that morning would fulfill Isaiah's vision of a temple full of smoke.

As we began to gather in the chancel, one of our dear four-legged friends decided to empty its bladder directly above the chandelier in the chancel, leading to an explosion of light bulbs and a fiery emission of incense, as a stream of living water cascaded down to the carpet below. I gave the abandon ship order and turned off the power, and we all processed down to safety in the lower regions of St Edmund, on the other side of our churchyard. We knew we really had to gently help our friends find a new home (radio music, squirt guns and bright light seemed to be the alternatives to a trap!), and then find ourselves a new covering overhead.

Hardware such as seating, heating and roofing all capture the eye and memory with beauty, warmth and comfort. That's the visible and tangible good that enables our ministry with people. There *is* more. In recent years, for all the setbacks and adaptation required by a pandemic context, the tangible, practical

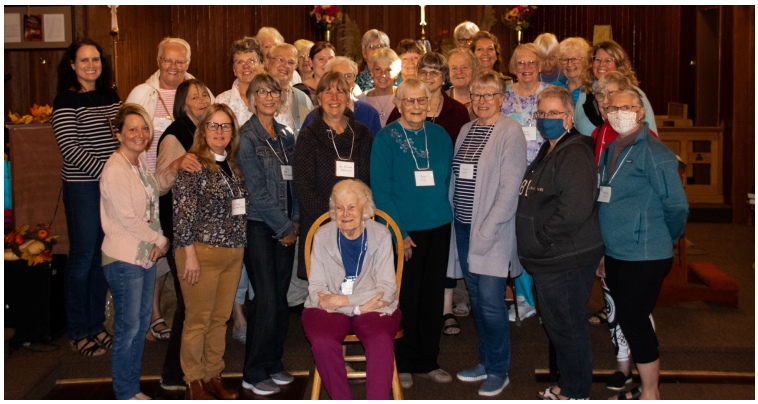
benefits, as well as intangible, spiritual benefits of our fundraising campaign have been there. There through teamwork and staffing, there for the training and mentoring of a youth team by means of employment and volunteering, there through programs of inclusive teaching and music for spiritual growth, and there through partnerships in the community that help feed the hungry and house the homeless. We are not done yet.

So here we are, protected by a new roof covering that is intended to endure a long time in the face of our crisis-soaked and stormy world. Symbolically, we stand under the cloud of the presence by day, and we offer a glowing light by night.

When it comes to being faithful to both past and future, William Morris's "keep only that which you know to be useful or believe to be beautiful" gives us a practicality of aesthetics and function. Let's have both and be both. That way we can go on being our own unique local contribution of healing cedar that our beloved log church symbolizes.

Finding hope in liminal times at the fall women's retreat

By Patricia Stock



Fall women's retreat attendees at St John, Duncan. Photo by Ken Stock.

The joyous noise of 32 women could be heard in the hall of St John, Duncan as they settled in to the fall women's retreat. The retreat was facilitated by Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee, who led the women through how they can find hope in liminal times. The retreat took place on Oct. 14–16 and spiritual direction was provided by Selinde Krayenhoff.

"Liminal" has many meanings, which we found out over the two days of the retreat together (Oct. 16 was a church service presided by the bishop), such as betwixt and between, on the threshold and in a transitory state of being.

We are living in liminal times, and what was once, is gone, and what is meant to be, is not here yet.

We are not alone, nor are we the first people to go through liminal times. In biblical history, the road to Emmaus was travelled by folks experiencing liminal times. Advent and Lent are times of liminality. Christians facing difficult situations today can take comfort in Jeremiah 29:11 ("For I know the plans I have for you…"), knowing that it is not a promise to immediately rescue us from hardship or suffering, but rather a promise that God has a plan for our lives, and regardless of our current situation, he can work through it to help us prosper and give us hope. The Psalms are also a great comfort during times of liminality, as they run the full gamut of emotions.

Our feelings during these uncertain times range between hopelessness, annoyance, exhaustion and anger, all interesting emotions that come with many questions in their wake. During the retreat, we looked at passages from Marc Brackett's book *Permission to Feel*, including the mood meter, which is a large colourful graph that plots out many emotions on a chart. We don't give ourselves enough permission to feel — we are often conditioned by our upbringing to not express our true feelings — and there is a power in being able to name emotions. As Brené Brown says in her book *Atlas of the Heart*, "Unprocessed emotions are never benign; they are always malignant."

It is often in these times, between the familiar and the unknown, that new discoveries are made. It is important to not cling to the future nor rush forward. These times have no true beginning nor end date. We are a society that searches for "closure," which is something invented by those who wish to rush through the process and are uncomfortable in liminality.

Anxiety tends to rise during times of liminality, and although some live in quiet denial, there are many things to be wary of, such as a shift in power dynamics. We may feel that we are in a constant state of distraction, bombarded with information overload from the media, social media and beyond. We should not allow these "tricksters" to deny our feelings, choose our responses and keep us away from critical thinking.

It is not a time to seek revenge and retribution but to pray and settle in. We are in this place for an undetermined amount of time. Light the candles wherever you are, as time is more sacred than place.

We have been down a similar road before with the Reformation, when the Bible was declared the "authority." But this declaration made for various denominations, and it is now not the clear authority that we can all agree on. This has made way for the clear authority to be what lives in "the conversation."

Liminality may not be sorted out in our lifetime. However, liminality is not a problem to be resolved. There is a beauty in liminal times. Much like the sunrise, it is the most beautiful time of the day.

Liminality is the time when God works in us more than at any other time. We may feel abandoned, but God is always with us. We must live in confident expectation and with grace and patience. History repeats itself, empires rise and fall, people are displaced, and their lives are changed forever, but God is constant and gives us hope. Hopeful people are not paralyzed by fear of their current situation. We must find the hope and our purpose for this transitory state of being.

We often do not see where the church is living and thriving as we are so focused on what is dying. We

cannot allow ourselves to be dragged back and, as it is written in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, there is "a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to harvest…" We must not let the structures that are holding us back win. God is in the process of remaking the world, and we are co-creators in the process.

We are being renewed into what we now know about our past and the hope that we will never again be the institution that created residential schools. Some aspects of where we were needed to die.

We all have the ability to act during these liminal times and it would be great if we could jump into a better way of being, but it is not possible. We must pass through the eye of the needle, come out of the spiritual crisis and be fundamentally changed people.

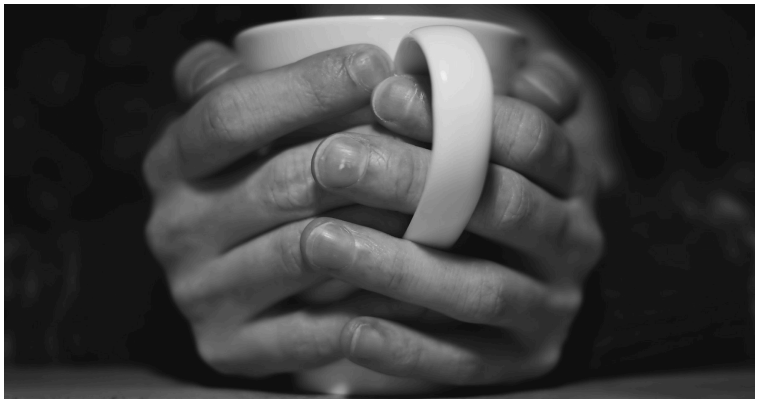
We need open minds and open hearts. We who will cross the threshold are not alone in this time and space. It is uncomfortable, and many of us do not like change, but we are reminded of the one big change — the day the stone was rolled away and the light shone into the dark cave.

We closed our retreat with a short affirming song by John Bell, which references passages from 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Revelation 21:5. A perfect sending song for finding hope in liminal times.

Behold, behold, I make all things new,
beginning with you, and starting from today.
Behold, behold, I make all things new,
my promise is true for I am Christ the way.

Addressing parishioner loneliness through gratitude

By Eric Partridge



"Two hands, one cup" by Svein Halvor Halvorsen. Used under a CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 license.

A while ago, I was talking with a senior parishioner. She's involved in three ministries in the church, often drives others to appointments, and has a group of dear friends she sees many times a week. But as we talked, she told me, "I love my life during the day, but when I go home at night, I'm achingly lonely."

In that one conversation, everything I thought I knew about loneliness was challenged. All the things I thought a lonely person needed to do to reduce their loneliness, she was already doing. That got me thinking about chronic loneliness and what a church might do to help. It led me to undertake a doctorate in ministry degree that focused on this question.

Everyone experiences loneliness at some time in their lives. In the short term, it is uncomfortable, but not life threatening. But when loneliness becomes chronic, it can have serious effects on the individual's psychological, physical and spiritual well-being.

More than one recent study has shown that chronic loneliness has a greater correlation with morbidity and early death than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It affects as much as 30 per cent of the population and inflicts real physical pain, interferes with the immune system, is linked with depression and suicide and can make a person feel separated from God.

A church's usual response to loneliness is to visit. And while visiting is a good thing, studies tell us that its salutary impact on the chronically lonely lasts as little as two days before they slip back into deep loneliness. When we consider that there are only a finite number of hours we can offer in visits and the short duration of its impact, it becomes clear that visiting is not the complete answer to addressing loneliness. We need to find a different way of visiting; we need to develop new tools and skills for our pastoral care teams so that our visits are more effective in managing the loneliness felt by so many of our parishioners.

For many years, undertaking practices of gratitude has been shown to increase happiness, with a correlated increase in various measures of mental and physical health, but until recently, no study has been done to explore the relationship between practices of gratitude and feelings of loneliness. In my doctoral studies, I wanted to find additional tools for us to combat the effects of chronic loneliness.

My research team was the pastoral care team of my parish. Members were paired with seniors in our parish, and the pairs met six times over 12 weeks. At each meeting, they prayed, read scripture and tried out new gratitude practices.

Different participants found different gratitude practices worked better for them, but all found at least one practice that they appreciated and chose to continue to use. The practices we explored included journaling, naming three things for which we're grateful and simply saying "thank you," as well as a number of other practices. None took a great deal of time out of a person's day, and all could be carried on individually after the study. At the start and end of the 12 weeks, the participants were tested using peer-reviewed measurement scales for gratitude and loneliness. The results were dramatic: 100 per cent of the participants had increased levels of gratitude and reduced levels of loneliness.

Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us. If we accept that loneliness is a serious issue, to be truly loving we need to find new ways to help those who suffer from it. Sharing gratitude practices with our parishioners is one more tool in our pastoral care tool box to do just that.

Hard hat country

By Herbert O'Driscoll

The excavation site is huge. Someday, a towering structure will emerge to — we fervently hope — grace the city. At the moment, this area does not grace anything. It is still what you might kindly call a work in progress.

For the last couple of months, the great machines have torn at the earth and dumped it into huge trucks that have ground their way along the streets to destinations unknown. In the last week or so, concrete and steel have begun to line the great pit. Sparks flash here and there as welders work. Slowly, the huge spine of the construction crane has risen, and it now stands like a great gaunt bird, swinging its head to and fro, distributing giant titbits to waiting groups of workers. As evening approaches, floodlights illuminate the cold, glittering chaos that lies behind the mud–stained scaffolding and the grey metal fence.

And yet, the scene can produce unexpected and even moving contrasts. In the face of all that I have described, I see, one day, an utterly different scene. For some reason one of the men in his hard hat has been called to the gate by what I assume is his family. His wife is telling him something. There are two small children. He has one in his arms and the child is tugging at his dad's bright yellow hard hat. The man is smiling at his wife, so I assume that whatever the reason for the visit, it is a good one.

It strikes me that I am looking through a door open for a moment into a world we so often understand, or think we understand, as hard and tough and unfeeling; a world of power and technology, of things such as union–management struggle. Sometimes a construction site can seem synonymous with soullessness and simmering hostility. We even use the term "hard hat" to label the world of such things.

Yet amid great looming machines, crumbling earth and grinding gears, the tiny hands of a child reach for a bright yellow hard hat and find a parent's love. As the city pours by around them, a family forms, for a fleeting few moments, an island of humanity in a world of machines, of permanence in a world of change, of love amid the demands of duty.

"Relearning Trust" with Cynthia Bourgeault

By Christopher Page

From Sunday, Sept. 25 to Thursday, Sept. 29, 50 people from Canada and the United States gathered in person at the Bethlehem Centre, to share in a "Relearning Trust" teaching retreat. Another 80 participants joined by Zoom from all over the world, some from as far away as South Africa. The retreat was sponsored by The Contemplative Society. We are grateful to the diocesan Educational Trusts Board for their financial contribution towards our participation in this event.

Each day included three sessions of teaching as well as silent meditation, embodied movement, sacred chant and community dialogue, including questions from Zoom participants. Much of Cynthia's teaching was inspired by writings from her latest book, *The Corner of Fourth and Nondual.*

Cynthia began by pointing out that the Christian contemplative tradition has often been accused of being ungrounded and uninvolved in the world. On

the contrary, she suggested, the disciplines of silence and letting go of inner chatter are the first steps in accessing a higher intelligence that desires to work in and through, equipping us to engage meaningfully in the world and respond collectively from a higher level of trust.

Cynthia's primary thesis was that the precious spiritual commodities of trust, forgiveness, faith, hope and love are active spiritual substances or nutrients. They are subtle energetic compounds necessary to nourish us and even the planet.

It is hard to see their true power because we have misunderstood these spiritual qualities. We have viewed trust as a situational quality. In this case, when broken, trust cannot be restored until the person who has broken trust proves themselves trustworthy. We impose a similar demand on forgiveness, demanding that the one who has done wrong acknowledge their wrong before forgiveness can be granted.

But trust and forgiveness are energetic qualities generated deep within the person who has been wronged or hurt. As much as it might be desirable to improve broken situations, it is possible to forgive without acknowledgement of wrong and to trust even when a situation does not seem trustworthy. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you… If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." (Luke 6: 27–28) As much as we may work to improve conditions here on Earth, we are never going to make the world or individual situations entirely trustworthy. But love, forgiveness and trust can flow from the divine source and work toward healing and nurturing the universe.

Trust and forgiveness are powerful active agents whose power resides within the subject who trusts or forgives because that is what is called forth from within. The failure to open and connect with the divine life force, which is naturally trusting and forgiving, is wounding to ourselves, to others and to the entire planet.

Cynthia touched on this theme in her recent address to the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops last spring, pointing out that it is the role of the church to help us connect and engage with a higher intelligence and that assistance from the imaginal realm is available, a realm invisible to the physical eye but perceptible through the eye of the heart.

The gospel logic says there is a generative power available that desires to flow forth regardless of the object. It is an offering of hope that has the potential to change the psychic atmosphere of the planet. Our first job is to nurture within ourselves the qualities Paul called the "Fruit of the Spirit" and then live from this deep well of inner aliveness out of which flows energy that supports the well-being of the world.

Inevitably Cynthia's reflections touched upon the ongoing effects of COVID-19. She offered a stirring challenge to see that the pandemic has exposed our collective terror of death and our brutally distorted relationship with life. It has revealed our collective and individual failure to live by love and to live beyond fear. We need to become intimate with the inevitability of death and see that, until we learn to trust in our own death, we will not be able to live freely.

Cynthia's visit also included a day-long workshop for 80 people at St George, Cadboro Bay. This day involved Anglicans from around the diocese and other faith communities, sharing in a more introductory exposure to many of the practices that Cynthia uses on longer

retreats.

Anyone interested in further notes from Cynthia's presentations can visit Christopher Page's blog In A Spacious Place.

"I had no more excuses"

By Eric Partridge

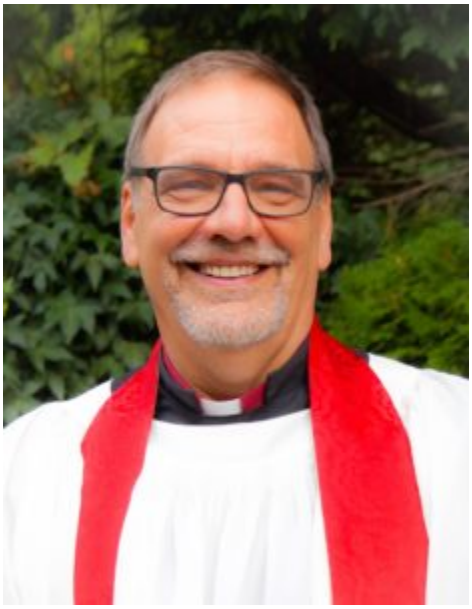


Photo courtesy of Eric Partridge.

When I was in my teens living in Baltimore, I was very involved in the Episcopal Church. At that time, I felt called to be ordained, and my bishop told me that after I finished undergraduate studies, he would recommend me to seminary. But while still in university, I began to wonder whether another vocation might be more suitable. So, instead, I took up teaching and began on what my children call my "ADHD career path," which makes sense since I was long ago diagnosed with ADHD.

Through the years that followed, I was a teacher, a lawyer, a small business owner, and a government bureaucrat. Each choice was satisfying in some ways but not completely right for me. Each time I changed careers, I heard a small voice in my head asking if "now was the time?" And each time, I responded that there was some reason for me to not be a priest.

During these years, my family had been attending a church from another denomination. And during that time, it had become clear that my first wife and I were not able to continue together. Unfortunately, that split caused our church to do some things that drove me out of churches for 10 years. When I later married my wife Sara, I remained uncomfortable in the extreme with organized religion and churches, generally.

Then, one Sunday, the Canadian College of Performing Arts, where Sara taught, was offering a Remembrance Day service at St Matthias in Victoria. Sara asked me to go with her to support her students. I went and sat as far back as I could. But when we came to the Eucharist, I found myself at the altar rail with tears streaming down my cheeks.

The next week, I surprised Sara when I asked if she wanted to go back to that parish. After the service, while on the way to coffee, I told her that I'd just be a moment as I wanted to speak to the priest, the lovely Bob Arril. An hour later I emerged to find Sara sitting outside the church hall — everyone else had gone home. She asked me what I'd been talking about, and I told her I was going to be a priest. I think her jaw must have hit the ground. In two weeks, I'd gone from not darkening the door of a church to feeling called to ordination.

In the week between the Remembrance Day ceremony and the meeting with the priest, I had found myself

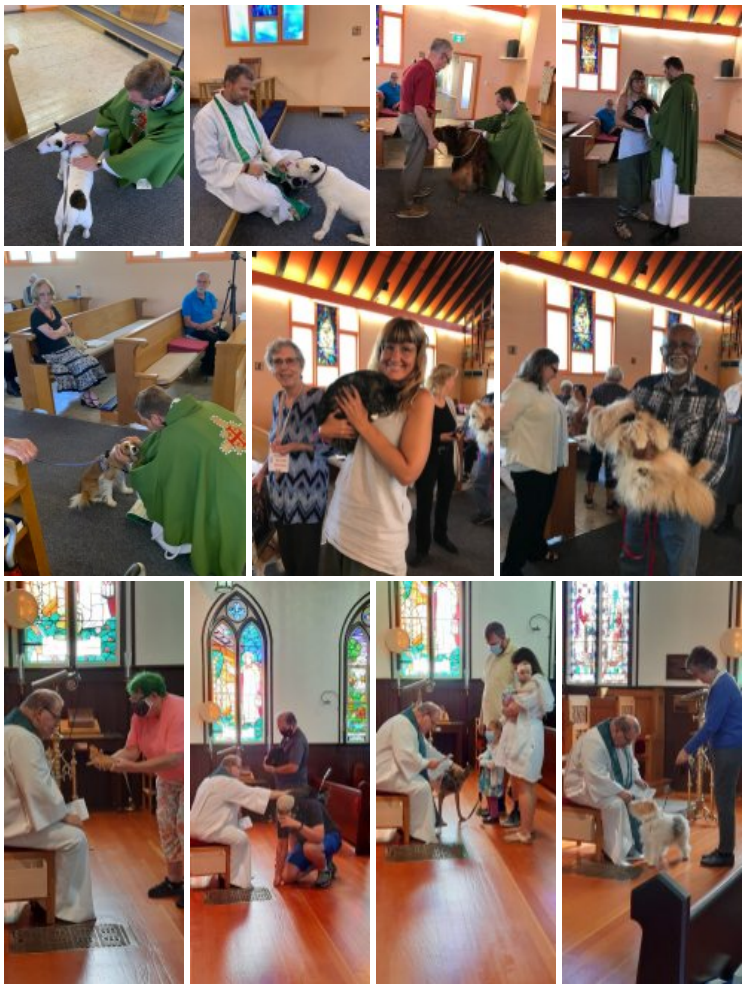
repairing something on the sole of my boat when I heard that incessant voice again. Was now, finally, the time to be ordained? And this time I knew I had no more excuses. God was calling me and no matter how much I tried to ignore that call, I knew that for me, it was time to go to my Nineveh, to go to seminary. Although Sara was quite clear that she did not intend to wear a sweater set and pearls (her initial image of what a clergy spouse might wear), my wife encouraged me to pursue my calling.

Unlike all my other career choices, my calling has filled me in ways I could never have imagined. Jonah only had to spend three days and three nights in a large fish. I had spent a lifetime avoiding where God wanted me to be. But then, maybe God's plan was actually to use that lifetime to prepare me for this moment. And for that, and for all the blessings I have enjoyed along the way, I am truly grateful.

Churches offer pet blessings in honour of St Francis of Assisi

By Naomi Racz

In early October, churches across the diocese offered pet blessings during their Sunday services, in honour of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals, whose feast day is Oct. 4. Below is a gallery of photos from pet blessings at St Luke, Cedar Hill and St John the Divine, Courtenay.



What happens at provincial council

By Gloria Hockley

Provincial council is made up of lay and clerical

representatives from the six dioceses of the Ecclesiastical Province of BC and Yukon. Normally, the council meets three times per year, two via Zoom and one in person. As with so many other groups, the council's in-person meetings were altered by the pandemic. We met together for two days in September at Sorrento Centre for the first time since 2019; it was a joyous occasion.

Rev. Michael Shapcott welcomed us, then gave an update on the happenings at Sorrento Centre. Through their meals program, they have delivered over 90,000 tasty and nutritious breakfasts, lunches and dinners since April of 2020. Most have gone to organizations that work with people who are hungry and some to community meals or other initiatives. They are gearing up for Homecoming 2023, their 60th anniversary. A new Associate Director has been hired. Sorrento works on reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous people, between humans and nature, and among humanity.

Our Eucharist provider was Archbishop Lynne McNaughton. Archbishop Lynne also gave us the highlights of the 15th Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England.

The main focus of the September meeting was a presentation on the emergency preparedness guide for parishes, from Clara Plamondon, our clerical delegate, incumbent at St Paul, Nanaimo and archdeacon of Cowichan Mid-Vancouver Island. This will be circulated to the dioceses as well as posted on the provincial website. There will be an emergency preparedness webinar following the Feb. 4 online meeting; details to be announced.

At council, there is a reporting mechanism for representatives of all dioceses, advisory committee on postulants for ordination (ACPO), Vancouver School of Theology (VST), western education collaborative Anglican network's Licentiate in Theology (WECAN), BC Yukon Anglican Youth Ministry (BCYAYM), provincial archives, social eco-justice working group (SEJ) and Sorrento Centre.

VST has completed the transformation of classroom space on the first floor into a "Zoom room." Renovations have begun on the Epiphany Chapel to green the space, renew the building and install technology. In the past year there have been significant gifts, which will enable further field education, provide money towards the Sauder School of Business program and allow for post-doctoral placements in Canada.

BCYAYM states that their primary challenges currently are reaching out to people as they no longer have a solid base of youth because of the pandemic, as well as logistical challenges. SEJ reported on the Season of Creation and pilgrimage programs around the province. Many ideas were generated when we brainstormed about what we can do together as a province.