



FaithTides

RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

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Waiting on Advent



Image courtesy of Janet Best.

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

Advent, the first season of the liturgical year, is a season of waiting. But it's not a passive or a bored or an empty waiting. For waiting, as a spiritual practice, is always active. In Advent, we are called to be fully present to the moment and to trust that what we are waiting for has already begun. We are like a gardener waiting for the seed to grow, or like the parent waiting for the birth of a child. We wait, actively, knowing that the new thing is with us now and will come to its fullness. We wait, in hope, knowing that the present moment is not empty.

Henri Nouwen, in an excellent essay entitled *Waiting on God*, talks about how the problem many of us have with waiting is that we are filled with wishes. We are so focused on what we are wishing for, what we want to happen or not happen, that we are not truly present to the moment. We are not truly open to what God might be doing in our midst. Instead, we are consumed with our desire for the future to go in a very specific direction, and we quickly begin to despair when this

does not happen.

Nouwen talks about how as spiritual people we must learn, in our waiting, to let go of our wishes and turn instead to hope. It is only when we stop wishing and start hoping that something new — something beyond our expectations — can take root and happen to us.

As I read his essay, it occurred to me that wishing is something that we do in the past, present and future tense. Sadly, many people have wishes that are really regrets: *I wish I hadn't done that; I wish I had done that.*

But hope is always looking forward, and hope is not nearly as specific as wishing. While we wish for very specific things, we hope for things that we recognize are beyond us, that can only happen by the grace and power of God. We hope for peace, for joy, for fulfillment, for the incoming of God — for all the big things that are beyond us and that can only come by God's grace.

As Nouwen writes:

“The whole meaning of the Christian community lies in offering a space in which we wait for that which we have already seen. Christian community is the place where we keep the flame alive among us and take it seriously, so that it can grow and become stronger in us. In this way we can live with courage, trusting that there is spiritual power in us that allows us to live in this world without being seduced constantly by despair, lostness, and darkness. That is how we dare to say that God is a God of love even when we see hatred all around us. That is why we can claim that God is a God of life even when we see death and destruction and agony all around us. We say it together. We affirm it in

one another. Waiting, together, nurturing what has already begun, expecting its fulfillment — that is the meaning of Christian life.”

As we begin the season of Advent as a diocese, as the body of Christ, let us help one another learn what it is to wait, in hope, on a God who is both present and yet to come, and who is always and everywhere becoming incarnate in our world in vulnerable, beautiful and surprising ways.

The story and the glory — a Christmas bouquet



Image courtesy of Janet Best.

By Herbert O’Driscoll

William Blake once wrote that it would be wonderful “to hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.” Many years later, another English poet John Betjeman did just that in his poem *Christmas*. In

the simplest of language, he expressed the infinite depths of meaning in what we Christians call the incarnation, the coming into the world of the divine in human form. Listen to him:

*And is it true? and is it true?
This most tremendous tale of all.
Seen in a stained-glass window’s hue,
A baby in an ox’s stall?
The maker of the stars and sea
Become a child on earth for me?
No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple shaking bells
Can with this single truth compare,
That God was Man in Palestine
And comes today in Bread and Wine.*

There you have two wonderful contrasts. First, a baby in an ox’s stall becomes the maker of the stars and seas. Then, we encounter the long-ago Jesus of Palestine in the timeless sacrament placed in our hands at eucharist.

I sometimes think that one of the problems of the Christian faith today is that we have become anaesthetized to its wonder through being overly familiar with it. For years now, I have found myself on a kind of quest to discover and to treasure moments when someone succeeds in capturing what I once heard Michael Ramsay, then Archbishop of Canterbury, call “the story and the glory” of Christian faith. The story, he said, is so simple it can be told to a child. The glory is so boundless that the greatest of philosophers cannot fully probe its depths. For me, John Betjeman’s deceptive simplicity captures the profundity.

Another such moment of realization. I recall standing in the dean's stall of Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, finding myself deeply moved as a full cathedral sang an old Welsh carol, and I realized that the words had captured both the story and the glory in language immensely powerful yet utterly simple.

*All poor folk and humble,
All lame folk who stumble,
come haste ye and be not afraid;
for Jesus our treasure,
whose love passes measure,
in lowly poor manger is laid.
And he shall reign ever,
and nothing shall sever
from us the great love of our king;
His peace and his pity
Shall bless his fair city;
His praises we ever shall sing.*

In the first verse, the tiny child lies in the manger. In the second, he has become the Lord of time itself, ruling an everlasting kingdom. For me there are other such moments. I remember listening to a young soloist sing that lovely carol "I wonder as I wander out under the sky." Halfway through the third stanza I noticed the shift from the earthly to the heavenly, from utter simplicity to deep mystery.

*When Mary birth'd Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall
with wise men and farmers and shepherds and all,
but high from God's heaven a star's light did fall;
the promise of ages it then did recall.*

Again, I heard the haunting qualities of contrast. First, the village girl who would for millions of people become Queen of Heaven, then, we find our common humanity among farmers and shepherds, before we are

suddenly borne away into the vast surrounding ocean of the stars. Once again, the story and the glory.

Over the years, there have been other moments seized before they vanished from memory, but then a bouquet can only be so big! A last moment/memory that captures both the story and the glory: back in the '60s, Thomas Merton wrote a poem he entitled *Carol*:

*God's glory now is kindled
gentler than low candlelight
Under the rafters of a barn:
Eternal peace is sleeping in the hay,
And Wisdom's born in secret
In a straw-roofed stable.*

Notice the beauty of the thought that even a candle can be the bearer of God's eternal light, that a wooden manger carries a human child who is the embodiment of eternal peace, and in the shadows of a stable, the voice of divine wisdom speaks God's eternal truth.

Maybe we should spare a moment to taste again those immortal images of Blake. What he said really applies to the whole world of worship. To worship is "to hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour."

A blessed Christmas to you and those whom you love.

Update on the diocese's refugee sponsorship program



By Brendon Neilson

The Diocese of Islands and Inlets has played a pivotal role in sponsoring thousands of refugees. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, the diocese has established a strong record of raising money to sponsor refugee families and then financially supporting these families during their first year in Canada. We are the largest Sponsorship Agreement Holder on Vancouver Island, and we are very proud of the work we have done alongside passionate and dedicated community members.

This work has been guided by our values: to welcome the stranger, to protect the persecuted, and to act with compassion. We have undertaken this work despite the

steep administrative costs because we know how important it is. In the face of growing conflicts around the world, it is more important than ever.

But due to new administrative requirements by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada that will cost us tens of thousands of dollars per year on top of the already significant costs we bear for this work, we simply will no longer be able afford to continue to act as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder. This is a difficult decision for us, and we recognize that there will be uncertainty in our community. It is not a decision we took lightly, and we make it with heavy hearts.

We want to assure you that we will honour our existing commitments and we will focus on the hundreds of applications still in process. We are also creating a Q&A for members of Vancouver Island's refugee community in multiple languages that will provide refugee families who are pursuing family reunification with guidance. Nevertheless, we recognize that our decision will leave a gap. That is why we are exploring how we can continue to do this work in conjunction with other organizations.

We have been so touched by the way so many parishes and community groups have given of their time and resources to support refugees. So many lives have been changed for the better because of this care and compassion. Only a few weeks ago, we welcomed the first Afghan woman refugee to Vancouver Island, a woman who was a non-profit employee and a civic engagement activist. A few months before that, we had a young man come first in his age group at the Toronto Marathon within weeks of his arrival.

We are in active discussions with both local organizations and with the other dioceses in our

province to explore ways that we can participate in this work moving forward and ensure that those interested can still sponsor and welcome refugees in our communities. We will continue to live by our values: welcoming the stranger, protecting the persecuted, and acting with compassion.

Jesus loves our transgender siblings



Image courtesy of Lyndon Sayers.

By Lyndon Sayers

I think about my trans friends and of their courage to simply be themselves. It's not right that they are forced to put their lives on the line every time they step outside the door. Whenever they go out in public, they risk putting themselves in harm's way, whether it is someone saying something transphobic to them, or worse, the risk of physical violence. The recent attacks against queer people at a gay bar in Colorado Springs, Colorado is on all our minds.

It hasn't helped that some celebrities, like J.K. Rowling

of *Harry Potter* fame, have spoken publicly against trans people. A surprising number of individuals with sizeable platforms have followed suit. In Canada, Jordan Peterson, a prolific writer and public speaker, has made hateful comments about the trans community as well. Sadly, in the U.S., there has been a spate of anti-trans legislation brought forward at various government levels over the last year. These have included "bathroom bills" and schools banning books and curriculum lessons that are trans-affirming. We would be naïve to think that what happens in the U.S. doesn't affect us in Canada too, especially at a time when news stories and conversations on social media are communicated in real time.

Swimming in the midst of this toxic transphobic soup, we as Christians need to find ways to push back against transphobia in order to protect trans kids and adults. This includes identifying prejudices that are inherent in our churches: ways in which we have been responsible for systematically excluding and singling out queer people for a long time. One thing that helps is in teaching theologies that acknowledge trans people as children of God. By recognizing their worth and holiness, we create safer spaces for them, and we rediscover our own grounding in God's love. Hate, like sin left unchecked, has a tendency to turn inwards. It also wounds those initiating the harm. When we counteract transphobia in the Church and in the wider community, we give expression to our collective humanity.

Like any theology, it's only effective when it is put into practice. One of the challenges of ministry is living by a new theological outlook. Pastor Lyle McKenzie and I serve as co-pastors at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Victoria, BC. Working together, we have been blessed to have a congregation that is willing to wrest with

questions around becoming more trans-affirming, is open to growing through conversation, and is centered on God's love.

I have now served at the congregation as co-pastor for nearly four years. I remember in my first year, we hosted Kingsley Strudwick, the founder of Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting, who offered a Trans 101 session that was open to the public. Kingsley was willing to meet people where they were at and to answer a wide spectrum of questions from our church folks. We had a chance to introduce ourselves to one another using our pronouns. Later at a queer-affirming Sunday worship, we invited parishioners and visitors to give their pronouns on their name tags. Many of us found this awkward at first because it's not something we were used to doing. Over the following Sundays, we as worship leaders introduced ourselves by including our pronouns. A member of the trans community told us that through this sort of repetition, we make such practices normative. This needs to happen on every Sunday, instead of just "queer-affirming Sundays" in order to make churches safer for trans kids and adults.

Other initiatives that have sprung up in recent years, include a "Queer Board Games" program, having occasional check-ins with a queer support team for feedback, marching in the Victoria Pride Parade under the Lutheran Church banner, supporting the Inclusive Christians campus ministry at the University of Victoria, and of course by building rapport and relationships with queer folks in our own congregation. I will be the first to admit that I've made mistakes and haven't been as consistent in supporting members of the queer community as I would've liked to. To build good relationships, we need to invest time and effort.

One recent example of community dialogue around

supporting trans people was on our church sign. On it, we had put up the message, "Jesus Loves Our Transgender Siblings." Sometimes simple and short messages are the best. On the same evening that the sign went up, someone on Instagram posted a photo of it, tagging us with the comment, "Every day looks a bit brighter after reading a @lutheranvictoria sign." Afterwards, we received many positive comments about our sign message. A student told us they feel safer living in the neighbourhood knowing we have an affirming presence. All in all, it's a very simple thing to do, and it's a way to uplift our neighbours and to remind ourselves that the Church cares for people within and beyond it. Since putting up the sign, we have formed a committee to help us continue to get our message across.

Besides an executive council, the governance at Lutheran Church of the Cross includes chairs of various boards. One is the board of care for communities. This committee oversees the church's service to those within its midst and to those surrounding it. This ministry includes caring for parishioners who are homebound, such as those who may not be able to come to church in person. Also within the board are the truth and reconciliation committee, the social justice committee (which includes a refugee sponsorship program), and a queer support team. As with all ministries, we are a work in progress. We continue to discern our future by responding to the ways by which the Spirit calls us to serve.

But I also value contrarian voices. Recently, I received pushback from a queer atheist friend: "Why is it that some churches affirm that God loves us as queer people, while at the same time many more Christians insist that God hates us? So why should we even trust

Christians?” In the wake of the shooting in Colorado Springs, and by the way this event gets talked about by right-wing believers, we have our work cut out for us. Rather than disowning these hateful individuals as not being “real” Christians, it’s better to take up the challenge of addressing their ignorance. We are ready to profess a queer-affirming faith in the face of a vast array of hateful, well-financed churches, and Christian voices. Rather than to renounce fellow Christians, it’s more effective to profess courageous and rigorous theologies.

No stone left alone



Image by Gillian Davidson.

By Naomi Racz

Cedar Hill Middle School students visit St Luke, Cedar Hill cemetery for Remembrance Day ceremony

On Nov. 3, 500 students from Cedar Hill Middle School took part in a “No Stone Left Alone” ceremony at St Luke’s to honour the 158 veterans buried in the cemetery.

[No Stone Left Alone](#) is a foundation set up in 2011 by

Maureen Bianchini Purvis, the daughter of Lillian Mary Bianchini, a Canadian WWII veteran who died when Maureen was a girl. Every year, on Remembrance Day, Maureen would visit the cemetery where her mother was buried, to lay a poppy on her headstone. When Maureen’s children noticed that none of the other veteran’s headstones had a poppy on them, Maureen decided to do something about it.

Not only does the foundation work to ensure no stone is left alone, but it also works to engage children and youth and create a meaningful experience of Remembrance Day.

Students from all grades at Cedar Hill Middle School attended the ceremony, while Grade 8 students acted as emcees, read poems, and explained the significance of the bugle calls “Last Post” and “Reveille.” At the end of the ceremony, students placed painted poppy rocks on the veterans’ graves.

“It was an impactful and moving ceremony,” said Barb Prescott, the church’s communications coordinator. “St. Luke’s is pleased to have this community connection with Cedar Hill Middle School.”

Redeveloping our future



Pictured are (left) St David by-the-Sea and (right) St Peter, Lakehill, two churches within the parish of Two Saints. The parish is currently exploring re-development options. Photos by Toad Hollow Photography.

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

One of the realities of church life and being church leaders, whether clergy or lay, is that we inevitably get wrapped up in property issues. Years ago, I asked a warden who had faithfully served with me in Toronto for four years what she learned during that time. She replied, “Well, I learned more than I ever wanted to know about weeping tile and sump pumps!” I know that her story is not unique and bless all those leaders reading this for all that you have done and continue to do stewarding our shared properties.

Many diocesan properties are at the age when they need (or will soon need) significant redevelopments and improvements. At the same time, many of these same churches face declining attendance, revenue and/or volunteer capacity. Recent census data that suggests

while about one-third of Canadians identify as not religious, here in British Columbia those numbers are much higher — 52.7 per cent of BC respondents reported as “no religion.” Vancouver Island is higher even than that with Victoria at 60.5 per cent and Nanaimo at 62.9 per cent, which makes them among the most secular cities in North America.

The question of how to best steward our properties in these changing times is an issue that we must consider carefully and prayerfully. Our properties are at once tremendous assets and tremendous liabilities, and we are called to be wise and thoughtful custodians.

Given the housing crisis in our communities, it is fitting that many parishes and people wonder if we might be called to convert some of our properties into housing. However, experience tells us that getting our properties rezoned for housing and then raising adequate funds to build affordable housing is not simple. Moreover, the extent to which we as the Church are called to be in the housing business must be carefully considered. Each site and each community is different and we must work toward a future where we can meet community needs, our own space needs as worshipping communities and generate income to sustain our ministry.

In June of this year, diocesan council created some property development guidelines. They are [available on our website](#) and I'd encourage you to have a look. There is also a very helpful guide on the website called [Capital Projects: It's Harder Than You Think](#). After more than a few failed starts and attempts, we have learned that property redevelopment can be long, complicated and costly.

In September, diocesan council also reinstated, as per

the canons, the asset management committee and created a property redevelopment fund that is intended to be a rotating fund so the diocese can assist in working to redevelop properties and generate income from our properties to sustain the work of ministry.

In October, Two Saints Ministry in Cordova Bay passed the following motion:

“That the Parish Council of Two Saints Ministry, represented by their Leadership Team, enter into conversations forthwith the Diocese of Islands and Inlets and any required consultants/partners to explore redevelopment/rezoning possibilities of both buildings and grounds of St. David by-the-Sea and St. Peter, Lakehill, to better serve the needs of the existing worshipping community and the local communities at large.”

I applaud the good people of Two Saints for their willingness to explore possibilities of how their properties could serve both their needs and those of the wider community. I am pleased to say that in addition to an initial grant from VanCity Community Foundation to explore redevelopment possibilities, we have also now secured a \$150,000 grant from the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CHMC) to start the process of discernment about what might be possible on Two Saints' St Peter's, Lakehill site. This might include housing, community space and worship space. No decisions or commitments have been made, but the housing shortage is so dire that there is federal money to investigate the possibility of these projects. Were something to be built with CHMC funding, it would need to deliver at least 30 per cent of its housing units at 80 per cent or below median neighbourhood rent. Accepting this seed grant from CHMC does not

obligate us to build our properties, but gives us resources to explore these possibilities.

Other parishes in the diocese are also at various stages of considering possible property redevelopments. None of these projects will happen quickly or easily, and we must all work together to be good stewards of our shared properties.

It is my hope that if and when parishes face questions about their properties and the need for significant changes, improvements and developments, the diocese can partner with them in finding life-giving and sustainable solutions that ensure vital ministry for years to come. We do not want to be looking at closing and selling properties, but rather at reimagining what might be possible so that they best serve community needs today and are preserved for future generations and future needs.

Christ Church Cathedral steps up its seasonal offerings

By Faith Tides

Christ Church Cathedral has announced its lineup of services and concerts for the holiday season. Advent, a season of preparation before Christmas, began on

Sunday, Nov. 27 this year, and the cathedral kicked off the festive season with its Advent Procession, a service of choral music sung by the cathedral's choir.

The season continues through December with choral concerts in collaboration with the University of Victoria and Early Music Victoria, as well as a chance for anybody to try singing Handel's "Messiah" accompanied by a professional instrumental ensemble and alongside the cathedral choir. Director of Music, Donald Hunt, says, "This was a new event for us last year and people had so much fun that we couldn't not repeat it."

On Sunday, Dec. 18, the cathedral will present a traditional service of lessons and carols for Christmas. A seasonal staple, the festival has been celebrated at Anglican churches and cathedrals for well over 100 years. The highlight this year is a newly commissioned arrangement of the Ukrainian traditional "Carol of the Bells" by Polish-Canadian composer Robert Busiakiewicz.

On Christmas Eve, there will be a family-friendly service at 4:30 p.m. The congregation will hear readings from the Christmas story and sing carols, followed by the traditional choral service at 10 p.m. All are welcome to receive communion at either service. Note that incense will be used at the 10 p.m. service.

The official end of the Christmas season is Epiphany, twelve days after Christmas, when the Magi arrive. In addition to a service on the day, the cathedral will mark this celebration with a special concert by world-renowned tenor Benjamin Butterfield alongside pianists Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata.

"As the Anglican cathedral that serves this city, it's

important that we open our doors wide this season,” says the Reverend Canon Jeannine Friesen, priest in charge of the cathedral. “I can’t wait to welcome back those who have had their holiday traditions interrupted by COVID-19 and to greet new faces who may be curious about what we have to offer to the community. I know many people are expecting a celebration, and that’s what we’ll be giving them!”

Advent to Epiphany at Christ Church Cathedral

For more information about events and links to purchase tickets, please [visit the Christ Church Cathedral website](#).

Saturday, Dec. 3, 3:30 p.m.

UVic Choir Concert

Saturday, Dec. 10, 2–5 p.m.

Messiah from Scratch: A sing-along benefit for our young choral singers

Friday, Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m.

EMV Pacific Baroque Series: Festive Cantatas (Bach’s “Magnificat”)

Sunday, Dec. 18, 4 p.m.

Christmas Lessons and Carols

Friday, Dec. 23, 7:30 p.m.

Capriccio Vocal Ensemble presents “Christmas in Versailles”

Saturday, Dec. 24, 4:30 p.m.

Carols around the Crib: A family Eucharist for Christmas Eve

Saturday, Dec. 24, 10 p.m.

Procession and Solemn Eucharist of the Nativity

(Christmas Eve)

Sunday, Dec. 25, 10:30 a.m.

Christmas Day: Sung Eucharist

The Cathedral will be closed on Monday, Dec. 26. Daily services resume Tuesday, Dec. 27.

Sunday, Jan. 1

The Naming of Jesus: Service Times

8 a.m. Said Eucharist

10:30 a.m. Cathedral Eucharist

4 p.m. Choral Evensong

Sunday, Jan. 1, 2:45 p.m.

Old Music for the New Year: A Neapolitan Baroque Celebration

Friday, Jan. 6, 7 p.m.

Epiphany: Solemn Eucharist

Saturday, Jan. 7, 7:30 p.m.

Wise Guys: Britten’s “Journey of the Magi”

For more information, contact Donald Hunt, director of music, at dhunt@christchurchcathedral.bc.ca, or Mark McDonald, assistant director of music, at mmcdonald@christchurchcathedral.bc.ca.

Faith Tides welcomes Interim Editor



Image courtesy of Janet Best.

By Faith Tides

Naomi — As of the beginning of December, I will be handing over the editorship of Faith Tides to our Interim Editor, Roland Hui. I will be on maternity leave for one year and will return in December 2023. I'm looking forward to meeting the new addition to our family — a little sister for my three-year-old daughter — and I feel confident that I will be leaving Faith Tides in good hands. Read on to find out a bit more about Roland and you can contact him at faithtides@bc.anglican.ca.

Roland — Like Naomi, I also hail from Manchester, England, where my family lived for a while after emigrating from Hong Kong. It was actually my interest in English history that set me on a path to becoming a writer and editor.

When I was about ten and settled in Canada, where we later moved to, we revisited Britain for a vacation. Besides the usual tourist attractions, we went to the popular Madame Tussaud's wax museum. As a kid, I was terrified by its infamous "Chamber of Horrors," but I was utterly fascinated by the waxworks of Queen Elizabeth I, Henry VIII and his six wives, and the like. That kindled what would become a lifelong passion for 16th century history, and I have since become a published author and a writer of academic articles on the subject.

My other interest is in art history, and after I completed a university degree in that field, I went on to work for various government agencies across the United States in interpretive media. These opportunities gave me a love for presenting natural resources and events of the past to the public through engagement and storytelling.

As the Interim Editor of *Faith Tides*, I want to continue in that vein to tell interesting and important stories, and to present the people behind them. I invite you on this journey with me. When I'm not at my desk typing up a storm or researching dusty old documents in a library, I can be found at the Church of St John the Evangelist in Montreal as your "friendly neighbourhood thurifer".

Making sense of Advent expectation

By John J. Thatamanil

“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.” ~ The Nicene Creed

The church is now in the season of Advent, a season of waiting and expectation. But for what? The answer given by tradition is that we wait for the coming of Christ in the incarnation; in the sacrament, and in glory. For most Anglicans, the first two pose few problems. The second coming, however, presents challenges for our naturalist age, one in which it is hardly possible to believe in an act of radical divine interruption that rolls up the scroll of history and brings it to a definitive conclusion. But aren't we Anglicans required to believe in the second coming? Or is this among the parts of the creed where some have their fingers crossed?

Thankfully, Anglicans are not known for confessional policing. Few among us are looking to establish the doctrinal orthodoxy of either clergy or laity. That is well and good, not least for me. The real test of faith, at any rate, is whether we are moving into the divine life, and the only criterion for establishing that is the measure of our capacity for love. To have “the right beliefs” and yet to be without love is to be, as Paul puts it, a clanging gong and noisy cymbal.

So, let's ask a different set of questions: 1) What are the risks, if any, of believing in the second coming? 2)

What might we lose if we surrender this hope?

The risks are clear: they include passivity, caused by a strong sense of divine agency that suggests that God will solve our problems for us without us, grounded in a view of divine power which suggests that God can insert Godself into natural causal processes.

If God can and will eventually come storming to rescue us from ourselves, then why care about the ecological crisis or a thousand other ills with which we must wrestle? We can adopt a passive attitude, or worse still, we can keep violating the Earth because we're not going to be here for much longer. After all, God will take care of it.

If God can and will come again in Jesus, then why hasn't God already acted more decisively in time and history? Where was God when God's chosen people needed God? Why the horrors of the Holocaust?

Are the natural processes of the world merely provisional? Can God suspend them at will? Beyond the innumerable occasions on which even basic moral decency would have required God to act and God either refused or failed to do so, this view denies to creation any integrity and consistency of its own. It's one thing to say that God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves; it's quite another thing to posit that God has the power to violate the natural order God created.

These reasons add up to a solid case for refusing literalist accounts of the second coming.

Now, let's work through the second question: What might we lose if we surrender this hope? I can think of two basic losses: a) a basic acquiescence to the world as it is; b) an exaggerated self-sufficiency that implies that

we must do everything because God can do little to nothing.

The Advent season cultivates in us a refusal to accept the world as it is. During Advent, we affirm that the way things are is not the way things have to be. To surrender to Advent expectation is, therefore, to fall into an acquiescence that things will always remain pretty much as they are now.

Advent expectation does not mean adopting a view of history as an inevitable process of onward and upward, a view of history as a steady march of forward progress. We know that is not so. The global emergence of authoritarian populism, the reversal of progress on women's rights in the U.S., and continuing ecological degradation show that progress is not guaranteed. But surrendering naivety need not mean capitulation to the status quo. Christians are a people of hope who believe that God is not finished with time and history. That is what Advent means — God is still at work making all things new!

A second danger of surrendering hope in Christ's coming is that it might lead us to believe that *we* must do it all, that the problems of history are entirely up to us to fix unaided. This is the equal and opposite danger of imagining that God will fix things for us without us; here, we imagine that we will fix things without God, that the great problems of time and history are really just a matter of humanity giving it the old college try. Such optimism takes little account of human fallibility and brokenness. So, how do we thread the needle between God doing it for us on the one side or human beings doing it for ourselves on the other? That is the dicey question.

The only answer I can see is the “both-and.” Human

action empowered by divine grace. To long for Advent is to long for the coming of justice, a world put to rights, an end to inequity and the many ways in which the poor and marginalized are devalued. When we pray and long for the coming of the Lord, we are praying and yearning for the consummation of creation. Prayer is how God gets into us — into our hearts, into our minds, and even into our bodies. When we pray, we open ourselves to a power that is not our own. In prayer and worship, we recognize that the power of love cannot do its work without us nor are we sufficient unto ourselves. Christ will have to come into the world through us.

During Advent, we trust that God is doing a new thing, but God needs us to be open to what God wants to birth in and through us. Christ must come again by the power of the Spirit and by the grace-filled labour of human hearts, hands, and voices working for the justice that is yet to come. Maranatha! Come Lord, come!

FUNraising and breaking bread at St Peter, Comox

By Mike Werth

Comox is the home of many Canadian Forces members. Because of the town's beautiful surroundings and its mild climate, it is an ideal retirement place for many military retirees. Members of the forces have a

long history at St Peter, Comox. In its churchyard, sailors' graves have been maintained for over a century, and faithful veterans of all branches still attend worship here.

On Nov. 11, the little main street of Comox, with its humble cenotaph, was crowded with people, in and out of uniform, for the big event. Wreaths were laid, the Last Post was played, heads were bowed and silence was held. Afterwards, the crowds dispersed, and many found their way around the corner to St Peter's hall, where a Remembrance Day open house has been a tradition for many years. Hot beverages, sweet treats and friendly faces greeted those coming in. Old connections in the community were rekindled, while newcomers got a look inside St Peter's. The open house has become a key event for the church to show its love for the community.

In that same month, our Festive, Funky, Fabulous, and Furry Winter FUNraiser was held in its third year. Nearly 300 items were up for auction to make Christmas gift shopping fun and easy. In the first year when the auction began, we placed items on a website and volunteers collected bids by email, text, phone and word of mouth. This proved to be a challenge even for our small collection of items, but we were delighted to discover how enjoyable it was for people to browse and bid on a variety of things.

In the second year, we researched different options and chose an established auctioneering website for our needs. The site was easy to use, and we placed our items in categories — clothing, jewellery, Christmas goods, fine art, collectables, games, handmade wares and so forth — to make the process easier. With the new system, bidders were alerted when they were outbid, so the auction was fast and furious, especially

near the end. Some individuals even used aliases to get surprise gifts for their loved ones!

The event proved so successful that by the third year this November, the number of participants and items had doubled on the website. As an added twist, Mavis, our parish dog, appeared in many of the listings. Bidders were invited to spot her appearances for a chance to win a prize. As all auction items were donated as usual, the proceeds went almost entirely towards supporting the good works of St Peter's. This year we raised nearly \$3,000. The fun, however, that we all had was priceless!

One of our post-COVID-19 initiatives was a free community lunch every month on the first Friday. One of the impacts of the pandemic was the inability to meet and to break bread together — one of the cornerstones of the Christian community. Excitement builds every month as the menu is prepared. We recently connected with an outstanding resource called Loaves and Fishes — a charitable organization that is a network of food producers, distributors, suppliers and restaurants, all working together to feed people in need. It publishes an online menu from which registered users, like St Peter's, places orders. We also have the support of two local bakeries which offer all types of delicious goods. And last but not least, the experienced caterers and chefs in our own parish make meals, desserts, and beverages all prepared with great care.

Parishioners are encouraged to tell friends and strangers about our lunches. Anyone — young or old, friend, family, or stranger — is welcomed and served. In the summer, we are able to provide a lovely picnic area under the trees in our garden, and in colder times, we use the hall. New friendships are made, old

friendships are renewed and Christian fellowship abounds. The warmth is not just from the hot soup we like to serve, but also from the love that is shown. And maybe it's just a little easier to feel the love of Christ on a full stomach. We are inspired by Hebrews 13:2: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."



south, or in the UK where Brexit was voted in by similar tiny margins like we often see in American politics and in many other countries. Polarization usually leaves both sides feeling entrenched, isolated and with all kinds of "bridges burning." Many painful divisions exist between family members or with friends or in communities of various kinds. While extremist politics play a large role, the question remains as to why is it so much worse now than in pre-internet times?

As many sources have pointed out, the internet made it much easier for people with whacky, scary, and dangerous ideas to find like-minded "comrades" online. In the past, those with such ideas were quite isolated since they were usually a small minority wherever they lived and had no way of knowing where other such people lived or how to reach them. For example, the "incels" or involuntary celibates — men who blame feminism in particular for their lack of a love life — have committed many crimes in recent years. In Canada, we had a horrific anti-feminist mass murder in Montreal on December 6, 1989, killing 14 young female engineering students — with the killer saying that feminists in non-traditional fields of study and employment had ruined his life. Of course, that was before the internet became pervasive, after which such extremist thought easily found like-minded thinkers to strengthen its stance.

On the internet, many people also spin conspiracy theories of many kinds. And despite the absolute ludicrousness of many such ideas, they often find hundreds or thousands or millions of followers. Among the most infamous group doing this is QAnon, with countless members on social media. QAnon also has many followers in Canada and other countries — where they seem to contribute to greater polarization

Polarization, neutrality and the Tower of Babel

By Adela Torchia

Many of us are horrified at the extent of polarization in our world, like that found in our neighbours to the

on many levels. With the arrival and ongoing presence of COVID-19 since 2020, polarization has escalated in the form of increasing mistrust of medical doctors, nurses, vaccine researchers, experts and scientists of many kinds. In its almost 30-year existence, the internet has convinced many people that anyone can be an expert on anything because each individual can find support for his or her ideas and opinions online.

Neutrality might initially seem to be a better option and goal than polarization; but let's keep in mind what Elie Wiesel said: "Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." Desmond Tutu voiced something similar: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." Popular memes on social media often encourage people not to care or not to get involved with things beyond their control. There are many messages suggesting that one's own peace of mind is far more important than whatever is happening in world news — so let's just smile and mind our own business. Sounds innocent enough, but instead it can easily be an invitation to full-blown selfishness or becoming slaves to our egos. In a vastly interconnected world, information about the sufferings and struggles in the world is always at our fingertips. Do we respond with compassionate action, or do we just say, "none of my business?"

There are two scriptures I especially think about in this regard. Firstly, Revelation 3:16 in which Jesus says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." The *Book of Revelation* is somewhat like Harry Potter in its ongoing fierce battles between good and evil, so there's not much room for being indifferent or neutral. Secondly and more significantly, I ponder the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. This story always leaves me with this

question: Why did God disapprove of everyone speaking the same language? Why was he so angry about something that presumably would bring greater human unity by promoting more understanding of each other? I mean, if we're speaking the same language, we ought to be more unified, right? Wrong. In our times we can see that the universal "language" of our internet connections — bringing the highly vaunted "democratization of knowledge" has done the opposite of uniting the human race. Instead, it has contributed immensely to polarizations in almost every field of human thought and endeavour. Yes of course humans still have many languages, but Google Translate can bridge the gap (despite its inadequacies). More importantly though, even when other languages are not translated, the internet shows us ongoing news — both real and fake — as well as infinite numbers of locally made videos showing us snippets of lives lived in other cultures around the world. Never before in human history have such glimpses into so many people's lives been so readily available. Why that has not brought greater empathy and compassion is an ongoing question in my mind and heart.

While we know the great harms that polarization is causing around the world today, let's be careful that we don't go to the opposite extreme of neutrality. As a well-known saying goes: "Hate is not the opposite of love; indifference is the opposite of love." While it's important to seek better understanding and appreciation of those who seem so different from us, and it's good to seek common ground, we must avoid the slippery slope of selfish neutrality that often turns a cold shoulder to the pains and struggles around the world.

We are interested in hearing your thoughts. We welcome letters to the editor on this and other articles in *Faith Tides* by emailing faithtides@bc.anglican.ca

Letters to the editor (December 2022)

By Faith Tides

Dear Editor,

The October issue's article in *Faith Tides* [bemoaning all the electronic waste](#) nudged me to inform you of the opportunity and obligation we have to do just that in Canada and worldwide.

On CBC Radio this week (Oct. 10, 2022) there was a comprehensive and very convincing explanation as to why we must recycle all our unused cell phones and electronics of all kinds; the minerals in them *can* be reused — very exciting and encouraging to find this out. The website recyclemyelectronics.ca contains information about where and how to do e-recycling.

*Frances Young
St George, Cadboro Bay*

Dear Editor,

Several public quotes recently highlighted the urgent need for unprecedented action to stop and reverse

climate change. “Co-operate or perish” from UN Secretary-General Guterres at COP27, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, and, “In the fight for life on Earth no one is a bystander,” King Abdullah of Jordan.

We as Christians need to remember we have a responsibility as Earth's stewards to care for creation and Jesus' admonition “to be as one.” Neither of these have we done. Now is the time to take up our yokes and put our faith into action. Easy to say, but what and how?

Firstly, I believe it is possible for Christian denominations and bodies to agree that this is indeed a point of unity that Jesus expected. Regardless of our human failings and disagreements, we should be bound by these truly basic Christian beliefs. This message needs to get to the leadership of denominations and other umbrella bodies of the Christian diaspora. The Canadian Council of Churches for one. Unprecedented, yes, but precedents are there to be broken for the greater good. It is time, nearly past time, for Christians to speak and be heard as never before.

Secondly, this must become international. Again, and for the same biblical reasons, why not? It is an international issue.

Thirdly, a small Pacific island-kingdom will most likely be the first country to vanish below a rising ocean. In Christian love they deserve our help.

Last of all are members of other religions, all God's children. Is it possible that this crusade could be backed through the Parliament of the World's Religions, and any similar association? The Anglican Communion is a member and there are common

values that bind us all.

United in this one cause, I believe we can save and mend our one world. Can we as a diocese be the spark?

*David Handley
St George, Cadboro Bay*

Advertise your parish event on Faith Tides

By Faith Tides

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faithtides@bc.anglican.ca and we will upload it to the website to be seen by all *Faith Tides* readers across the diocese. See below for file sizes and specifications.

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If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to the *Faith Tides* editor at faithtides@bc.anglican.ca.
