



FaithTides

RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

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The most secular diocese in North America



A plant growing among the rocks by Freestocks.org. Used under a CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) license.

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

As we begin 2023, I'd invite us all to consider the recent census that suggests we are the most secular diocese in North America. According to data compiled two years ago, one third of Canadians identify as having no religion. Here in BC it is much higher with 52 per cent saying likewise. Moreover, on Vancouver Island it is even greater. Nanaimo is in fact the most secular urban centre in the country at 62 per cent. The rest of the diocese isn't much further behind with Victoria at 60 per cent and Parksville at 52 per cent. Vancouver, by comparison, is at 47 per cent. Things look much different on the east coast with only 20 per cent of respondents in St. John's, Newfoundland saying they are not part of any religious denomination.

These trends are of course reflected in church attendance. While in 1957, 53 per cent of Canadians could be found at worship on a Sunday morning, today, only 10 to 15 per cent attend a weekly religious service or any.

In 1965, Harvard professor Harvey Cox published what is still considered a very important book entitled *The Secular City*. He posited that the Church is primarily a people of faith and action, rather than an institution and that "God is just as present in the secular as the religious realms of life." Cox also argued that far from being a conventional religious community, the Church should be in the forefront of change in society. "Intrinsic conservatism," he thought, "prevents the denominational churches from leaving their palaces behind and stepping into God's permanent revolution in history."

Earlier in 2009, Cox published *The Future of Faith*. In that book he talks about how the "Age of Belief" — an era that began about 1,500 years ago when the Church moved from being a movement to an institution and became increasingly focused on creeds and hierarchies — is over. People nowadays, Cox wrote, just can't or won't believe anymore. However, there is a huge resurgence and interest in the spirit and all things spiritual. Cox calls this new awakening the "Age of the Spirit."

How this "Age of the Spirit" is manifested here on Vancouver Island is perhaps best captured by the recent book *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest*. In it, one of its editors Paul Bramadat proposes that our unique corner of the world has a particular confluence of secularity, spirituality and openness. One of its defining characteristics is a "reverential naturalism" — themes

and values that emerge from conventional religion. This suggests to me that reverence for the natural world and finding spirituality in it is a way for us in the diocese to connect with those who do not identify as being conventionally religious. Undoubtedly, we have shared concerns like the state of the environment, the threat of climate change and so forth.

The very opening passages of the Bible are of course the story of God creating the world. What we need to focus on at this moment in history is that it is the state of creation, not the institutional church, that is God's primary concern. The church does not exist for its own sake but for that of the world and more than ever, the world is in need of healing, restoration and resurrection. We are called to fulfill our baptismal covenant by striving for justice and peace among all people and by safeguarding the integrity of God's creation. It is for us to respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.

The secularity of this time and place is not a problem to be solved so much as it is an invitation to find new ways to connect our faith and our practice with it. For God, I am quite sure, is just as present in the secular realms of life as in the religious. The secularity of our age does not mean that God is not present or that the Spirit is not moving. Rather it means that we need to be on the lookout for movement of the Spirit in the world.

Will the new year bring anything new, or just more novelties?



(CVA — Media Productions / iStock / Getty Images Plus)

By John J. Thatamanil

The new is not the novel. The novel appears routinely — novel gadgets, novel operating systems, and even novel cultural trends. But the genuinely new is exceedingly rare and feels almost miraculous.

I think about the new every year as we prepare to greet each other with the customary acclamation, “Happy New Year!” But how new will this new year really be? Suppose we gruffly retort to our New Year’s Eve well-wishers and ask them, “Tell me, what do you imagine will be *new* about the coming year?” What response might we imagine other than the certainty that invitations to next year’s New Year’s Eve parties will dramatically decline?

What do we really expect for the coming year? Surely the same kinds of polarised political factionalism, rampant gun violence in the United States, international conflagrations launched by grandiose bullies, and a worsening of our already grave climate crisis? So, what will be new? Probe us in our soberest moments, and we are sure to sound like the author of Ecclesiastes, who most famously declaimed, “There is nothing new under the sun!”

So what counts as new, rather than merely novel? One indicator of the presence of the new is fundamental transformation. Some years ago, I received sobering news from my doctor that I was a diabetic. The litany of dire consequences of that dread disease scared me, and a desire for health kicked in. I became disciplined and lost 30 pounds. I ate differently, exercised routinely, and even started running. At peak fitness, I could run 4 miles without stopping — a miracle for a lifelong asthmatic. Sadly, COVID isolation reversed much of this gain. Enforced quarantining took its toll. I am now slowly working to return to the discipline bandwagon, but that’s a story for another day.

I share this personal anecdote because profound habit change with respect to eating and exercise didn’t just happen. Fear played a role, but a change that lasts for years does not materialise by fear alone. Something else had to happen beyond my own willing and doing — namely, the birth of a new relationship to myself. Enduring patterns of transformed living cannot be fear-based because as soon as the fear subsides, old habits will reassert themselves. The new must enter by another doorway — in my case, a healthy love for my well-being and even flourishing. I wanted and still want to be well, not just for myself, but also for those I love.

We find here a clue to the emergence of the new: the presence of love. The novel requires only a measure of inventiveness. Real transformation springs from deeper well-springs such as love.

A second feature of the new is that it cannot be produced; it must be born. Every birth requires a patient surrender that is prepared to wait. Mothers can aid a child’s growth *in utero* by engaging in self-care — a healthful diet, exercise, and rest. Still, the child’s actual development is essentially a passive and involuntary process for which the word “expectancy” is right on the nose. You cannot cook your child any faster; it just takes the time it takes. Writers, artists, and creatives of any sort know this lesson of birthing. The novel can be produced, even mass-produced, but the new must be born.

If the new is to emerge, something must break us out of the well-established in which we’ve found ourselves — whether that rut is personal or societal. There is nothing new about the powerful getting their way. The new arrives when the tables are turned, and the oppressed and marginalised finally receive their due. The 2016 election of Donald Trump was, at best, novel; we have all witnessed mediocre white men of means being granted unearned privileges. But the eruption of a global protest movement after George Floyd’s murder — nothing in the world could have predicted the surge of love and justice following his brutal public execution.

The Black Lives Matters movement did not emerge *ex nihilo*. There were years of patient toil, grassroots mobilisation, and relationship building between organisers and communities. Like any birthing process, labour is required, but when the new arrives, it is always more than anyone could have predicted.

Christians routinely turn to the language of the Holy Spirit to speak of what is genuinely new. The Holy Spirit quickens the birth of the Christ child. The Holy Spirit inspires the disruptive prophets of old to speak in the power of the Divine Name. The Holy Spirit falls on the earliest Christ-followers on Pentecost and gives birth to a wholly new form of egalitarian social order called the Church.

This Christian language receives secular echoes when writers talk of being inspired or visited by their muse or daemon. These are ways of naming that in all authentic newness, a wilful and muscular drive to “make it happen” is never enough. Instead, there must be a waiting, opening, even a kind of expectant yearning before the new arrives unbidden.

So, will 2023 bring the new or just novelty — the latest smartphone or smartwatch, for example? Will our personal and social lives be marked by the staleness of encrusted habit, or will something break in reversing the humdrum and predictable order of our lives?

Only time will tell, but we can prepare. Like expectant mothers, creative artists, or patient farmers, we can till the soil, water it, offer it nutrients, let it lay fallow, and restore what has been depleted by overuse. Then we pray for the miraculous germination of the fragile green shoot. When we combine the patient work of cultivation with the tender work of longing — the religious call this *prayer* — the new breaks forth. We cannot predict it, but we can prepare for it.

This article was originally published on [ABC's Religion and Ethics portal](#) on December 29, 2022.

Christian themes in the Harry Potter book series



Harry Potter books on display. Image by Roland Hui.

By Adela Torchia

Having recently finished reading the seven volumes of *Harry Potter* (British Bloomsbury edition) for the first time at age 70, I was struck by its great relevance to Christian themes, among other things. This is not a new idea since the author has stated that she used them in the series, and countless people have written commentaries on this overall idea. In fact, no less prestigious a place than Harvard Divinity School had a five-year podcast entitled *Harry Potter and Sacred Text*. Googling “Christian themes in Harry Potter” instantly brings up over four million results, so I don’t claim any originality in presenting this topic.

An important concept throughout the seven books is that of the soul — making it clear that its well-being is essential to human happiness. The horrible Dementors,

for example, are much to be feared for their ability to take one's soul away, thus rendering life to be not worth living. Doing evil deeds splits the soul — something to be avoided, unless you are the Dark Lord who hopes to gain immortality by soul-splitting.

The books are also infused with the theme of self-sacrifice as the greatest power, beginning with that of Harry's mother as a means to protect her son as a baby. And Harry himself makes many sacrifices to respond to his duties as "the chosen one" — the one designated by Voldemort as his nemesis, and whom the Dark Lord is constantly pursuing. There are many more instances of self-sacrificial love throughout the series. This is commendable as it is often viewed as counter-cultural in our world where "being yourself" and serving the ego are given priority.

With the approach of Ash Wednesday in February this year, one can easily google "Phoenix and Ash Wednesday in Harry Potter" and receive over two million results. The Phoenix was Dumbledore's animal companion as well as his "patronus" or protective shield. The Phoenix is important in Christian history, symbolizing the immortal soul and Christ's resurrection when it comes to life again after death. Since the Phoenix burns up when it dies and is then reborn from its own ashes, it connects well to our Ash Wednesday custom of being signed with ashes.

In the final Battle of Hogwarts, Harry comes to realize that he needs to surrender to Voldemort — to surrender his own life so that hopefully the Dark Lord will stop killing others. As he reaches this conclusion, Harry achieves deep peacefulness, and as he goes towards his fate, the spirits of his deceased relatives appear and offer him support. The young wizard asks them if it hurts to die, and his late godfather says, no,

not at all, since at that moment, all the pains and struggles of life come to an end.

Harry also encounters his beloved teacher and mentor, Professor Dumbledore, waiting for him on the other side. Dumbledore tells Harry that he can return to life if he wishes to do so — clearly the concept of resurrection here. But Harry is initially uncertain as he is finally at peace after a life full of immense struggles. However, he then realizes that should he accept such a return, he can bring much healing to the world. Harry finally agrees to go back. Then as he and the Dark Lord prepare to duel to the death in front of hundreds at Hogwarts School, Harry shocks Voldemort by saying, "But before you try to kill me, I'd advise you to think about what you've done... think, and try for some remorse." Voldemort is utterly shocked, and Harry goes on, "It's your one last chance... it's all you've got left... be a man... try for some remorse." But of course, the Dark Lord is utterly incapable of even considering such a thing. They have their final battle, and Voldemort is killed, not by Harry, but by his own rebounding curse.

Another theme of the Harry Potter books is the ongoing necessity to keep fighting against evil — to be always vigilant against the undermining of good in our lives and in our world. There are Christians who say that there is no such thing as evil — only good and a lack of it. Sounds sweet enough, but it fails, I think, to account for the immense evil operating in our world in so many ways. In early December, we heard reports that Pope Francis cried in public while reciting one of his prayers for the Ukraine. Clearly, he is aware of evil's power in our world and laments the harm it does to so many people. In the same spirit, the *Harry Potter* novels emphasize that caring about the vulnerable, such as the house-elves and the non-magical humans who appear in the stories, is essential to goodness, and

not caring is a prime example of the opposite.

So much more could be said on this subject, but hopefully these few examples I've mentioned will encourage those who have not read the books to have a go at them. Give yourself a treat and pick them up soon!

A timeless love



Image courtesy of Direct Media.

By Herbert O'Driscoll

I recall reading somewhere that something we take totally for granted about the human mind is in fact one of its most remarkable accomplishments. It is our ability to make associations between the most dissimilar things. Recently, I was reminded of a moment of association made years ago when I was in parish ministry.

I was, I remember, in the emergency section of a hospital. Someone in the parish who was living alone had asked me if I would go with him. He had fallen in his apartment, and he feared that he had broken his wrist. He wished to be sure, so here we were in a fairly

crowded emergency room.

I was standing by his hospital wheelchair. Near us, two people were chatting. One was a young intern, and the other, an elderly and rather frail gentleman. I overheard their conversation. The patient was brought in by his family because he had not been feeling well and had a bit of a worrying heart history. The intern was obviously trying to get as much of his background history as she could. She was calm and unhurried, an achievement in this bustling emergency room. She was undoubtedly a caring young woman.

As they conversed, another staff member approached the intern and said something urgent, presumably about another patient. The intern took a pen from her pocket, wrote the name of her patient on the back of her hand and promised to return quickly. This was a simple thing to do and probably frequently done in those distant days before electronic note-taking apps. For me however, the gesture took me on a soaring journey 2,700 years into the past. Yes, that's a very long time, over two and a half millennia.

In my imagination, I saw a small country that had been savagely invaded, with many of its people forced into bondage. It was a scene of much despair. Yet one great poet wanted to give hope. During the captives' arduous journey across 700 miles of desert to the labour camps of their conqueror, he forged a message. He wrote words that offered the love of the One who could be relied upon to be helper and comforter in every circumstance: "*Behold, says God, I have graven thee upon the palm of my hand.*"

I thought of that twenty-seven-hundred-year-old image of the love of God as I watched that young woman scribble the patient's name on the back of her

hand so that she wouldn't break trust by forgetting him and so not returning.

I never learned her name, but I suspect she became a good doctor. The poet's name, by the way, was Isaiah.

Thank God for all of this



Hold Hands by Brian Talbot. Used under a CC BY-ND 2.0 license.

By Wally Eamer

When Roland Hui, the interim editor, contacted me in November about writing regularly for *Faith Tides*, I had one comment and three questions. The comment was easy — I admire the quality of the publication and I congratulated him and Naomi Racz (the editor currently on leave).

The questions were harder:

1. Why me?
2. About what?

3. How often?

My general rule, formed by age, experience and goals, is to avoid new ministry without requests and to seriously consider all requests. A service ministry starts with those who would be served. The general rule is sometimes thrown out for those without a voice.

Question 1: Roland should answer to himself, not to me.

I proposed answers to Roland for question 2 — stories about people who lived in ways I consider admirable and, less often, personal reflections, and as to question 3 — five times a year. Roland accepted. This will continue as long as the editor and I both think we are touching upon what you, the readers, find enriching, and that we are able to do just this. Regardless, no day is promised to us, so it will end.

The stories I tell come from people I've met as a deacon. Often, these individuals are outside the Anglican church or any denomination or religion. That is our culture — the sea in which we swim and where deacons must be. To quote with a twist the French revolutionary Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "*People are born spiritual and not everywhere are in religious community.*" Equally true — God is at work everywhere with everyone.

The stories are intimate yet do not name the actual persons involved. We need the insights of people with a range of privacy needs, so with a stringent standard we can tell more stories. Everyone has spiritual experiences, very often untold even within our families. Anonymity encourages us to look with fresh eyes and mind — might that story be about A? C? D? X? Maybe. Or maybe the person's story is different and

equally strong. Take the risk to be vulnerable. Go explore.

Here is a story:

A couple were together for over half a century; to be a bit of a math nerd, that is 500,000 hours.

Both were very active with family and friends, their church and community and other threads of their lives. But then cancer came fast and hard. With modern medicine, cancerous cells can be cut out, burned with radiation or poisoned with medication. With this particular malignancy, only medication could be used. This continued for over a year and in the later stages became palliative. Finally, as they wished, death came at home.

There was time to talk intimately with family and friends about the love and journeys they shared. The deep wish was *more time to love*. Love is infinite; human life is not infinite, a year is definitely not.

What was in the mind and heart of the second person through this loving journey and its painful end? In this case, the question and answer came together:

Where is God in all of this?

Thank God for all of this!

Near the end, a gathering of people had been around the couple to provide medical, practical and emotional support. On a trivial level, the health care and prayers were not a success because the patient died; trivial questions and trivial answers led to bitterness. When we seek immortality of the body, we ask *where is God in all of this?* The answer is nowhere.

At a deeper level, God does not give immortality of the body, nor should we demand it. The kingdom of God is about the flow of love — among people and with God — for eternity. The kingdom is moving and changing just as a cloud. The couple experienced the kingdom of God in the cloud of care. What could have been bitter — abandoned by God in what we want most — became inspiring — *thank God for all of this!*

For the surviving spouse there was of course mourning and tears. A void has been put in their lives. Yet, in a paradox to some, the person left behind spoke of gratitude as well. With the kingdom of God, love is the foundation and there is a bottom to the void. We are never completely alone, never completely cut off from love. Gratitude and peace can follow even after great loss.

Thank God for all of this!

New developments in the diocese's refugee program

By Brendon Neilson

Last month, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee, Rabbi Harry Brechner and Imam Zoheir Tahar co-authored an opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail* about the impact of upcoming federal regulations upon refugee sponsorship: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-federal-changes-could-make-it->

[impossible-for-private-groups-to-sponsor/](#).

In it they advocate that the Canadian government should be working with SAHs (Settlement Agreement Holders) to make it easier for communities of faith to continue the important and sacred work of welcoming refugees to our towns and cities. Changes to policy will place more administrative burdens on SAHs (who are volunteer-based for the most part) and there will be stresses upon funding to meet these new demands.

We have an impeccable record of managing our program and making our sponsorships successful. We are proud of the work we have done and of the individuals who have come to Canada to establish new lives. However, our efforts will be facing new challenges. The changes to be implemented, we believe, are short-sighted. The intention of the federal government, it appears, is to minimize risk while squandering the substantial social capital that has led to thousands of hours and millions of dollars being dedicated to our work over the past years.

I encourage you to write to your Member of Parliament and share your concerns about these changes and the impact it will have on the newcomers, many of whom are hoping to sponsor their loved ones to reunite with them here in Canada.

It may be worth noting that we have successfully completed 105 sponsorships (of about 420 people) over the last six years. Currently, we have 128 people with 12 months of sponsorship and there are another 300 waiting to enter our program. All in all, this is approximately 850 newcomers to our communities.

We are in active discussions with the Vancouver Island community and the Ecclesiastical Province of British

Columbia and Yukon about new ways that our work can continue. We are hopeful about these possibilities. We are saddened by the regulations being put in place and we hope that the government comes to realize the impact of its decisions upon the families and individuals hoping to find refuge and a new life in our country.

Ordination of Kirsten Evenden to the priesthood

By Faith Tides

Kirsten Evenden is being ordained to the priesthood at St Mary, Nanoose Bay, this January.

Kirsten has been active in the Anglican church since her teens and her involvement in parish life led her to discern for ministry. She was ordained to the diaconate in September 2022 and is currently the deacon-in-charge at St Mary's.

Kirsten's interests include music and the outdoors. She sings with an acapella quartet and plays guitar. She also enjoys gardening and photographing nature around Vancouver Island.

Currently, Kirsten is enrolled in the Master of Divinity distance learning program at the Atlantic School of Theology from which she intends to graduate this spring.



Kirsten Everden. Image courtesy of the Atlantic School of Theology.

Joyous gifting by the Dorcas ministry

By Alice Trueman

On Oct. 25, 2022, members and friends of the Anglican Church Women (ACW) met at St John the Baptist, Duncan, to sort and pack donations for our outreach to the Diocese of Caledonia. This year, boxes were sent to the villages of Old Massett on Haida Gwaii, Port Edward, and Vanderhoof (including Fort St James and Fraser Lake).

This joyous annual gifting has taken place for more than 160 years. There was a news item in the *British Colonist* of 1861 about ladies gathering at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, to pack “bales” — large shipments wrapped in canvas and tightly twined — for Caledonia and then socialize over tea. These were shipped to Prince Rupert, and from there, those designated for the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii) continued by sea, and the ones for the interior of British Columbia by whatever means were available. Today, the donations travel in taped cardboard packing boxes and go by air to Prince Rupert.

Unfortunately, we have many fewer ACW branches now and many of our members are unable to contribute in the ways they did in the past due to their advancing years. Also, the number of parishes in Caledonia able to distribute the contributions has shrunk to one quarter of the number in 1998 when I began working with Dorcas. For instance, John Martinson, a long-time priest who was looking after the boxes for Port Edward, passed away in 2013. It is now time to bid adieu and give thanks to all the people who made this mission such a success for over 16 decades. The ACW executive urges parishes not to give up these good works but to concentrate on needs closer to home.

When we talk about Dorcas, we think of our mission to the Diocese of Caledonia, but who was this woman in real life? In Acts 9:36–43, she is described as a lady of good works. She lived in Joppa, now known as Jaffa, by Tel Aviv, and was a member of the church established there by Philip the Evangelist. It was famous as a centre of evangelism and social service. Dorcas, a woman of means, did not just donate money, but used her hands and sewed for those less fortunate, particularly widows and children. When she later passed away, Dorcas had

no relatives to attend to her remains, so widows she had befriended helped at her funeral. Great grief enveloped the town. Learning that St Peter was nearby, the church at Joppa sent two men to ask him to come to the town. When he arrived, the widows reverently displayed the coats and other garments Dorcas had made for them. Peter was so moved that he raised her from the dead to continue her good works, bringing comfort and joy to the people of the town. This miracle of mercy convinced many of the truth of the Christian faith.

Dorcas was unaware of the magnificence of the work she was doing and its far-reaching consequences. She did not strive to be a leader but was content to work quietly and with humility. Her story, though, has been an inspiration to many. Using a humble sewing needle, she showed that no works are too small in God's eyes.

Dorcas societies have grown up around the world to meet the needs of those in their communities and farther afield. Now the time has come for us to use our skills in knitting, crocheting, sewing and quilting to work on projects for those in need. After the isolation of COVID-19, it is important to continue to help others, especially the lonely. Keep safe, follow the health protocols, and be joyous in your good works.



A new appointment for Christopher A. Harper



Christopher A. Harper, Diocesan Bishop of Saskatoon. Image courtesy of the Anglican Diocese of Saskatoon.

By Faith Tides

Christopher A. Harper, Diocesan Bishop of Saskatoon has been named National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop and Presiding Elder of the Sacred Circle with pastoral oversight over all Indigenous Anglicans last month.

The appointment was formally announced by Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) Co-Chairs, the Rev. Canon Dr. Murray Still and Caroline Chum.

“Archbishop-elect Chris Harper brings years of experience in ministry among and with Indigenous Anglicans, urban and on reserve,” says Archbishop Nicholls. “He has a passion for walking together with respect that will be essential as the Sacred Circle within the Anglican Church of Canada establishes its way forward. I look forward to working with Chris as we learn together how God is calling us to witness to this new relationship.”

ACIP Co-Chair Caroline Chum has also added her best wishes. “Gitchi-Meegwetch (great thanks) to everyone for their prayers and blessings during the selection process for our Presiding Elder. We look to you now to continue your support for Indigenous Ministries and our National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Chris, as we journey to our Sacred Circle 2023.”

Dames, Divas and Icons at the Chapel Gallery



Dames, Divas and Icons exhibition. Image courtesy of Dale Roberts.

By Roland Hui

The invitation read “Tea Party Attire Encouraged!”

On the afternoon of Dec. 3, St Matthias, Victoria, was packed with parishioners, friends, and visitors decked in their festive finery. Christmas was still weeks away, but everyone was keen to celebrate nonetheless, raising a toast to artist Dale Roberts, or rather to his alter ego that day, Dame Mailarta. The “hostess with the mostess” was resplendent in a black and white ensemble, complete with a feathery hat adorned with flowers and an Elizabethan-inspired ruff around her neck. As tea was served, guests were entertained by pianists who tickled the ivories with musical selections by Doris Day, k.d. lang, Sarah McLachlan, and Celine Dion.

After a warm welcome by Dame Mailarta, guests were ushered into a room attached to the church. It is usually a place of worship and contemplation, complete with an altar, pews and stained-glass windows, but it also serves as St Matthias's art gallery. Since its inception in 2019, the Chapel Gallery has continued to showcase artists on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Its mandate is to present artwork, in a variety of media, that inspires, engages, and encourages dialogue — especially around the pressing issues of today. As Mary-ellen Threadkell, a member of the curatorial team at the Chapel Gallery explained, the exhibitions serve to bring the community together and to introduce people to local artists and their unique perspectives. Dale Roberts' show, Mary-ellen continued, has been most successful in that regard. Since it opened in mid-November, the exhibition has received an enthusiastically "huge response from all kinds of people."

Dale is certainly talented, not to mention prolific. The Chapel Gallery's walls were mounted with over 50 framed portraits of "Dames, Divas and Icons" as his show was called. Several were from the LGBTQ+ community of which Dale is proudly a part. Among his creations were well-known figures such as drag artist RuPaul, writer Oscar Wilde and singer and songwriter k.d. lang. Dale had also paid tribute to other individuals to whom he has felt a kinship: actress Dame Angela Lansbury, comedienne Lucille Ball and writer Margaret Atwood, just to name a few. All have touched Dale's life in one way or another.

One would think that Dale's portraits were painted on canvas, but upon closer inspection — to the surprise of many visiting the show — they were anything but. They were in fact made of needle-felted wool. Each image was meticulously embroidered upon a support

on which a sketch of a person was made. Then with a needle, coloured threads were pulled in and out and manipulated to carefully create shapes, hues and textures. Dale is so meticulous that his colours blend with great subtlety, especially in his creation of his sitters' skin tones.

No wonder it takes him more than 100 hours to create one portrait, as he said. Not all of Dale's work on exhibition was two-dimensional. He also created life-size whimsical tributes to some of his favourite divas. Upon the high altar — now an exhibition space — were busts of singer-actress Cher, television personality Dame Edna Everage and of course Dame Mailarta herself. Also nearby is a portrait of the recently departed Queen Elizabeth II.

Behind the busts were postcards and photographs of more famous faces. Dale is also a keen "autograph hound," and he has reached out to many celebrities for their signatures. Inspired by one W. Reginald Bray who, in the earlier part of the 20th century, amassed a large collection of autographs and curios through the post, Dale himself has written to many people of interest by sending a postcard with their likeness on it to them in the hopes of a reply. Among those who have responded with their signatures were disco diva Donna Summer, comedienne Carol Burnett and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Dale has even received a reply from Buckingham Palace — though unfortunately without a royal signature — from an aide asking more about his work.

So where does Dale's inspiration come from? "In spending on average 100 hours on each piece, I find it is often a meditation on who they are, and I will find songs, film clips or a series of visuals to give me further insight into the person and the character portrayed."

Dame Judi Dench was particularly inspiring as Dale recounted. “After seeing her documentary about her love of trees and naming them, I chose a tree at the entrance to Beacon Hill Park and named it the ‘Judi Tree.’ I then painted it, did photographic studies, and added it to the background of my felted portrait of her.”

While the time and effort it takes Dale to create his portraits can be demanding, he is undaunted as he is constantly inspired by the “dames, divas and icons” he has incorporated in his work as an artist. Such individuals, Dale explained, make us “feel better in the moment” and they “open up the hearts of people and allow spaces for love.”

So what’s next for Dale? A portrait of an ancient ancestor he has affectionately dubbed “The Earl of Wool.”

Dames, Divas and Icons ran from Nov. 18 to Dec. 4, 2022 at the Chapel Gallery, St Matthias, Victoria.

To learn more about Dale Roberts and his work, visit <https://daleroberts.blogspot.com/>.



Christo fascism in Canada



Image courtesy of Lyndon Sayers.

By Lyndon Sayers

In front of the BC legislature on many Saturdays over

the past year, you would see people holding up signs about freedom, many of them white Christian men and women. If you looked or listened closely, you would also hear messages about hate.

Christo fascism is on the rise in Canada. By Christo fascism, I mean predominantly white Christian groups in Canada seeking to impose their religious views, including discrimination of marginalized groups of people, upon the wider public. This includes actively opposing policies of queer inclusion at public institutions such as schools, universities, health clinics and legislative bodies, especially through undemocratic means. Tactics include intimidation, harassment, threat of violence, and seeking to revoke or repeal charter freedoms of other Canadians. These groups that often wave the flag of individual and religious freedom are also among the first to want to revoke freedoms of groups of people they find undesirable, falling outside of the norms of an extremist Christian faith.

White supremacists and hate groups have established a foothold in Canadian churches, including hate groups disguised as public interest groups. For example, so-called groups of concerned citizens who allege trans kids are victims of child abuse, simply for falling outside the gender norms these extremist Christian groups prescribe. A group will say they are concerned and then show up *en masse* protesting actual children who are exercising their freedoms simply to exist. Such protests have happened recently in Vancouver.

Christo fascists are resourceful in latching on to whatever bandwagon is travelling through town at a given time. During the height of the pandemic, we saw a rise in hate groups supporting anti-vaccine movements. It was an effective strategy at getting people riled up about mask and protective mandates.

Furthermore, under the cover of concern about government overreach on public health and individual freedom, similar groups active within the Convoy Movement then used the momentum to advance hate agendas and conspiracy theories. They attacked queer kids, promoted anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, disputed the severity of residential schools and more.

I saw this firsthand visiting the convoy protests at the BC legislature in downtown Victoria a couple of times in spring 2022. I heard one guy yell anti-Semitic slurs through a megaphone only to have someone next to him elbow him and say, "Not now." Such people hide behind a cloak of legitimacy by supposedly standing up for individual freedoms. We are in danger they argue, from alleged global cabals. Such theories have a lot in common with anti-Semitic propaganda in Nazi Germany. And yet you can still find them today in countless YouTube videos, memes and blogs. The QAnon conspiracy movement has helped make some of these ideas mainstream. What QAnon groups have learned is that if you repeat lies over and over, you can gain a foothold in the public conversation about public matters. This strategy has been effective in that they have many followers worldwide via the internet and social media. Sadly, their extreme views and mistruths are difficult to monitor. It can be argued that some social media companies are reluctant to take action against them. They make billions of dollars by driving traffic to extremist videos and posts. Hate and lies help deliver clicks, which drive up advertising revenues. That said, the regulation of social media companies in Canada is an issue worthy of consideration.

In spring 2022, there were Canadian groups holding rallies around Victoria that featured not only anti-vax speakers, but also anti-queer speakers as well. There are several of these groups that have a foothold in the

lower mainland of BC. And there are even some local churches and supporters in Greater Victoria and throughout Vancouver Island who assist with the organizing and coordinating of these organizations. When pressed, many will deny they encourage hate. Instead they stick to safe talking points around individual freedom. But the reality is that their followers push discriminatory agendas against trans children, their parents, teachers and school officials who provide space for queer kids in educational institutions. For this reason, trans kids desperately need the vocal support of both individual Christians and churches. It's harder for queerphobic Christians to push their hate when voices of opposition rise from within the Christian tradition.

As progressive Christians, we were unprepared when anti-mask and anti-vax groups were organizing protests outside of hospitals and government buildings during the pandemic. Convoy organizers seized the momentum to build their movement. The city of Ottawa was occupied and there was even talk of more radical actions to be taken. Many of us looked on in incredulity as similar movements elsewhere in Canada were formed, inspiring similar activity in other countries.

To a large degree, Christian fascist groups may often get away with their actions and hate speech before anyone can duly respond. In Ottawa we saw that it took public opinion — the anger of local residents and others in the city — to force the local police to act. But by that time, removing large trucks, bouncy castles, mobile saunas, power generators etc. was an arduous task. It also led to the questionable tactic of invoking the Emergencies Act as other options at the disposal of public leaders and police were seemingly ignored or passed over.

So where does this leave those of us in the mainstream churches as Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians and so forth? One effective step we can take today is to begin talking about these issues in our places of worship. Too often a culture of politeness prevents us from having meaningful conversations. Remaining silent in the face of creeping fascism is a dangerous response as it allows it to fester.

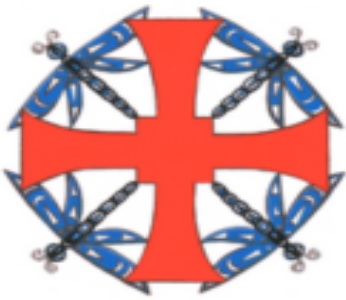
Let's talk together. Let's share our thoughts and feelings about what is happening politically in the non-partisan sense of politics. Step-by-step we can organize a movement as followers of Jesus that centres on the love and safety of racialized people, queer folks, disabled folks and women. That is a true Christian freedom worth working towards.

This an opinion piece by Lyndon Sayers, a pastor at Lutheran Church of the Cross, Victoria. Although not technically part of the Diocese of British Columbia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) is part of our church family due to our full communion relationship. Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the diocese.

Nominations for the Order of the Diocese of BC

By Faith Tides

The Order of the Diocese of British Columbia



Recognizing extraordinary voluntary
commitment and service.
Investiture Service: October 21, 2023
Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria
Nominate an extraordinary lay leader
from your parish!

Do you know someone deserving of the Order of the Diocese of BC?

On Oct. 21, 2023, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee will invest the next group of worthy people into the Order of the Diocese of British Columbia.

The nomination process thrives on the active participation of each parish submitting the name of

one of their number to become a Member of the Order and jointly with other parishes the name of someone to become an Officer of the Order.

Who can be nominated?

For Member – A lay person of the diocese who has provided extraordinary service to their parish and/or community

For Officer – A lay person or retired cleric who has provided extraordinary service to the diocese, the province, the Anglican Church of Canada, or the nation

Honorary Officers and Members – These are awards given to people who are NOT members of our diocese. They are British Columbians who may not be of our denomination, or even faith, but nonetheless have demonstrated the same sort of exemplary service to their community, province or country. Whilst these are very limited in number and are within the gift of the bishop, the advisory council is always open to suggestions. If you think you may know of such a person, please contact the secretary of the Order to discuss.

Who can nominate?

Member of the Order – Each parish may nominate a person.

Officer of the Order – Five members of the diocese (a mix of lay and ordained) from five different parishes may nominate a person.

Timing for the 2023 Investiture

Nominations open January 2023

Nominations close April 30, 2023

Confirmation of Award by June 30, 2023

Investiture Service Saturday, Oct. 21, 2023 at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria.

For details of the who, what, when, why and how can be found on the diocesan website under **Resources, Order of the Diocese of British Columbia**: <https://bc.anglican.ca/resources/order-of-the-diocese-of-british-columbia>

Advertise your parish event on Faith Tides

By Faith Tides

Did you know you can advertise your parish event on the *Faith Tides* website for free? Simply send your ad to 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.

If you need support creating your ad, send the text to faithtides@bc.anglican.ca, and we will work with a designer to create your ad. Please note, this option comes with a small fee of \$20.

File specifications:

Format: GIF, JPG, PNG

Max size: 150KB

Ad sizes (at 72–150 dpi):

Billboard: 970 x 250 px

Top banner: 930 x 180 px

Vertical rectangle: 200 x 400 px

Small banner box: 300 x 150 px

Small button box: 145 x 145 px

See how the different sizes look on your web browser here: [Faith Tides sample ad sizes](#).

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