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TOPIC
Diocese of New Westminster

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Inspired by Art

Christmas Message from Archbishop Melissa Skelton

"I also am mortal,
like everyone else…
And when I was born,
I began to breathe the common air,
and fell upon the kindred earth;
my first sound was a cry,
as is true of all.
I was nursed with care
in swaddling clothes.
For no king has had
a different beginning of existence;
there is for all one entrance into life,
and one way out."

The Wisdom of Solomon 7:1-5

Taken at the special exhibition *Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement*, Seattle Art Museum, 2019. PHOTO Archbishop Melissa Skelton

Like most of us, I knew that Mary, the mother of Jesus was supposed to have been a young woman (some would even say a "girl") when she gave birth to him. But it wasn't until I saw Arthur Hughes' painting of the nativity that the implications of her youth began to sink in. For in the painting there she is: with her hair flattened against her head as can happen when an inexperienced person is under stress. There she is: concentrating on her task of swaddling her new baby with such intensity that you can almost see her hands shake. There she is: clearly a beginner in caring for her new baby, a new baby whom she knows is no other than God come among us, God beginning human life the same way that any other human being would begin it.

And so, both of these images — Jesus wrapped in his swaddling clothes and the young Mary concentrating on caring for him — are gifts for us this Christmas.

The image of Jesus wrapped in swaddling, mentioned in Luke's Gospel and depicted in Hughes' painting, is meant to speak to us about Jesus' humanity and, as a part of this, to speak to us about his utter dependence on his mother for his care. Like every other rich or poor baby in the ancient world, Jesus was swaddled — bound in long strips of cloth that were meant to bundle and restrain him, making him feel secure and rendering him unable to move or do anything for himself. The message of this image, then, is clear. Jesus as the Son of God has become one of us, subject to all the vulnerability and dependence on others that would be true of any human baby. The incarnation is not partial but complete.

And then there is the image of Mary as a girl, a young woman, doing her best to care for her baby. She is a beginner, a novice in her role as a mother in the same way that we are as we try in our own ways to give birth to God in our lives and for the world. Like her, we will have shaky hands and perspiration on our foreheads as we do this. Like her, we want to offer our best to this task, trusting that our best will be enough, and that God will make of it what is needed for this world of ours.

My wish for you, your family and friends this Christmas is that you have a moment during which these two images have a chance to sink into your consciousness: the incarnation of God is complete — there is no experience that we undergo that God has not taken into God's self; and you I will always be beginners as we give birth to and nurture the new coming of God into the world. ✠

Christmas blessings to you and yours,

In Christ,
+ Melissa

Happy 50th Birthday to Topic • February 15, 1970

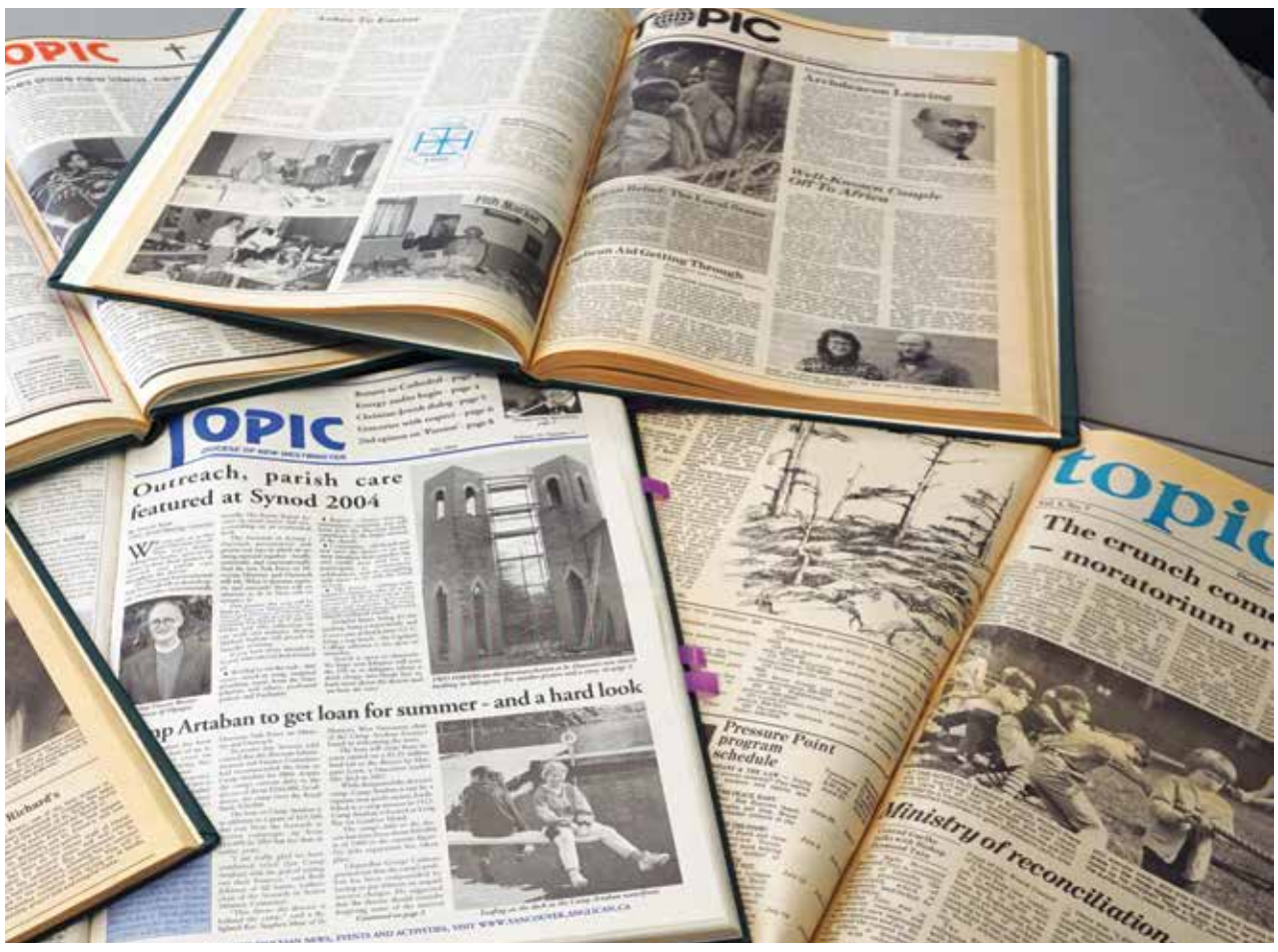
In the 1950s and early 1960s, the *Anglican News* brought news and information of the diocese of New Westminster to thousands of Anglicans. Things changed, it ceased to be published, but a few years following its demise, in early 1970, out of that void and at the request of the late Archbishop David Somerville there appeared a four-page printed communique delivered along with the eight pages of the Christ Church Cathedral newsletter *Contact*… and that was the humble birth of *Topic*.

In order to properly commemorate this historic diocesan event, the February 2020 issue of *Topic* will be dedicated to a celebration of our diocesan publication.

We will still accept your content submissions, but they will need to wait to be printed until the March issue. Deadline for the March 2020 issue of *Topic* is January 17, 2020.

Originally, we were hoping to create a "stand alone" publication, however, our planning began just prior to the communications leadership of the Anglican Church of Canada beginning their analysis of print media in the church and its future. There was a great deal of uncertainty about the outcome, and there were a number of possible outcomes to that analysis that would certainly impact distribution and budget. To some degree "the dust has settled" and the national paper, the *Anglican Journal* with *Topic* will be published for the foreseeable future and delivered, but only to those who have intentionally subscribed, parishes and diocesan offices.

We don't want to disclose too much information about what's in store for the special anniversary issue. Suffice it to say that there will be offerings from former editors, photographers, editorial board members, clergy and more.



Dear Topic Readers

You can help communicate the Good News of the arrival of the Light of the World by passing on to friends, family, and neighbours the web location of the diocese of New Westminster's Find-a-Church pages at www.vancouver.anglican.ca/find-a-church.

There are 66 easy to access parish pages grouped in 11 deanery sections with regional location information on the entry graphics and detailed location information for each parish. Many of the parish pages will also include specific listings for Advent and Christmas worship and events, inviting everyone to participate. All are welcome!

It is our privilege to produce Topic and we are extremely grateful for our readers and the wonderful support we receive from Around the Diocese.

To you and yours the merriest of Christmas's and many blessings for 2020!

Randy Murray, *Topic Editor* and
Jennifer Ewing, *Topic Designer*

Growing communities of faith in Jesus Christ to serve God's mission in the world.

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Issue This is the 10th issue in the 50th year of publication

Deadline For Submissions Due to the 50th Anniversary issue in February, the next submissions will be for the March 2020 issue; Deadline January 17, 2020

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The diocese of New Westminster
The Anglican Church in the Lower Mainland, the Fraser Valley and on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, located on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish First Nations, consisting of 69 worshipping communities.

The Archbishop of New Westminster
The Most Rev. Melissa M. Skelton

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Thank you!

Love Your People, Say Your Prayers, Have Fun

Leading Women Conference 2019

RACHEL TAYLOR

Administrative Assistant Finance, diocese of New Westminster, Christ Church Cathedral & St. Brigid's, Vancouver

Mundelein, Illinois — in that area of the US Midwest often referred to as "Chicagoland" — was beautifully bright and sunny the week leading up to Canadian Harvest Thanksgiving 2019. October 8 – 10, 70 ordained women from across the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church descended on the University of St. Mary of the Lake to discuss discernment around senior leadership positions in the church; the differences between Canadian and American contexts; and ask the question of each other,"what do you really do?"

The Rev. Canon Judy Rois, Executive Director of the Anglican Church of Canada's adjunct organization, the Anglican Foundation gave a presentation on how the suffrage of women led to the ordination of women. Canon Rois continued on in her presentation with some speculation on what Anglicans might expect in the coming years. Bishop Chilton Knudsen, now in ministry as the assisting bishop of the diocese of Washington was consecrated in 1997 and served as diocesan bishop in the diocese of Maine for more than a decade. Bishop Chilton spoke of the trends she had witnessed during her ministry in the Episcopal Church, especially how systems of power change and shift, and how we are called to be lifelong learners within our ministry and within our communities.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Ellen Clark-King, former Priest Associate and Vicar at Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver and now Vice-Dean at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, led a presentation and discussion on the Theology of Leadership, delving into how the Desert Fathers and Mothers encouraged each other and raised up leaders amongst themselves. Canon Clark-King also reminded participants that there is no way to be all things to all people, and that knowing your faults is an integral part of leadership. Recognizing the need to ask for help is important, as is making key decisions about "whom to ask." The balance that this kind of approach brings can make good leaders into great leaders.

Representatives of such positions as Metropolitan/Archbishop (our own Archbishop Skelton), Executive Archdeacon (the Ven. Sarah Usher, diocese of Yukon), Canon to the Ordinary, and Dean of the Cathedral (the Very Rev. Ansley Tucker, diocese of BC), led panel discussions and breakout sessions on the skill sets required for their ministry positions, and what important lessons they had learned in pursuing and embodying their roles. They also shared the questions they consistently ask themselves as they continue their work.

Canon to the Ordinary, the Rev. Canon Janet Waggoner passed on this beautiful quote via Bishop Knudsen via Bennett Sims: "Love your people. Say your prayers. Have fun."

The Leading Women conference of 2019 could not have been possible without the sponsorship of the Anglican Foundation and the Anglican Initiatives Fund.

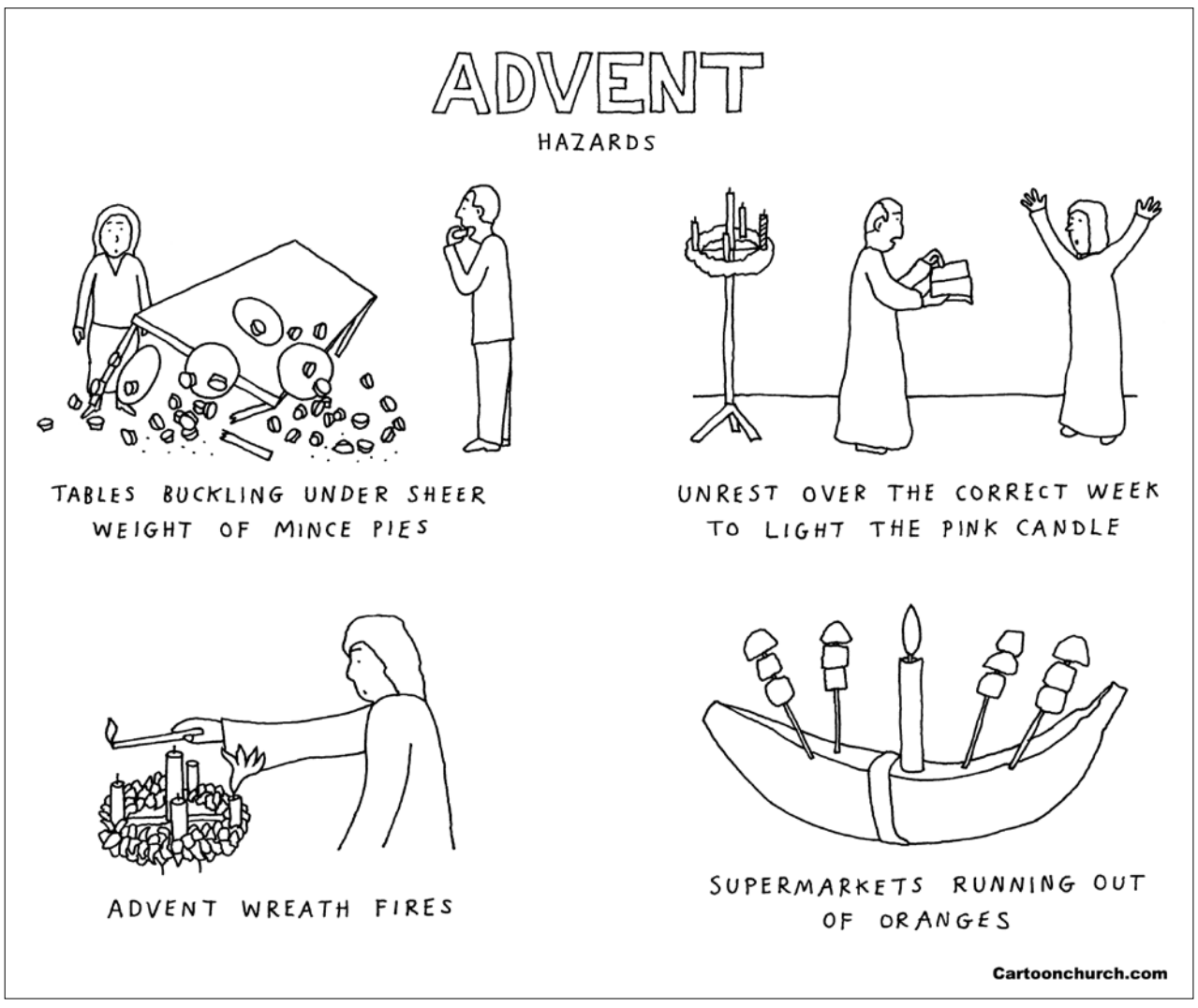
Leading Women: A Brief History Lesson.

Leading Women began in England in 2010, founded by several English clergy including June Osborne (then Dean of Salisbury, now Bishop of Llandaff), Lucy Winkett (then Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, now Rector of St. James, Piccadilly) and Jane Shaw (then Dean of Divinity at New College, Oxford and now Principal of Harris Manchester College, Oxford).

The first Leading Women in the Episcopal Church was held in 2016, organized by the late Stefani Schatz (Canon to the Ordinary, diocese of California), Mary Gray-Reeves (Bishop, diocese of El Camino Real), Jane Shaw (then Dean of Religious Life, Stanford), and Helen Svoboda-Barber (then Rector of Harcourt Parish, Gambier, Ohio) with administrative assistance from David Wantland.

This first Leading Women: Anglican Church of Canada + The Episcopal Church was organized by Helen Svoboda-Barber (Rector, St. Luke's, Durham, North Carolina), Melissa Skelton (Metropolitan of British Columbia and Yukon) and Rhonda Waters (Incumbent, Church of the Ascension, Ottawa) with help from administrative assistant Rachel Taylor. ✠

The big group photo — Leading Women 2019. PHOTO Rose Provenzano



Prior to the procession, visiting clergy pose for a photo: Director of Mission and Ministry for the diocese of New Westminster, the Rev. Dr. Tellison Glover; Archbishop, the Most Rev. Melissa Skelton; and Assistant Curate at St. Helen's, Surrey, Deacon, the Rev. Jonathan Pinkney. PHOTO Randy Murray

Members of the choir processing in singing *Christ the Fair Glory*. PHOTO Randy Murray

St. Michael's, Surrey Celebrates 60 Years

RANDY MURRAY
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

The summer of 2019 was busy at the Parish of St Michael's, Surrey. Parish activities on those warm days and nights began with a family bowling night at Scottsdale Lanes, attended by 18 folks. All had a great time. This was the parish's second bowling night of 2019, and the parish-affiliated bowlers are looking forward to more.

Participation by the parish at the "now-annual" Surrey Tri-Parish Eucharist (which has increased to '4' with the 2019 inclusion of Christ the Redeemer, Cloverdale) at Bear Creek Park is an important Sunday in the church year. Archbishop Skelton was preacher and presider for the sixth year in a row.

Later in the summer on August 24, St. Michael's staged a BBQ event with hot dogs, hamburgers and corn on the cob. According to parish reporter, Dave Reynolds, "…it was fantastic, 25 people gathered, and the younger members of the parish remained and played games after the meal."

However, the big event took place on September 29, when the parish welcomed Archbishop Melissa Skelton to preach and preside for the patronal festival, the Feast of St. Michael and celebrate 60 years since the founding of the parish.

Founding member (and also the first Sunday School Superintendent), Amy Barker wrote a brief history of the founding of the parish on the inside cover of the order of service bulletin. In her piece she described the first meeting on July 14, 1959, at the home of Dr. and Mrs. J. T. Dawson, the appointment of officers by the rector of Christ Church, Surrey Centre, the Rev. Keith Mason, the founding of the new chapter of the Women's Auxiliary of the Anglican Church (the forerunner to ACW) and the names of those involved. This group of people became the first parishioners and at their first meeting it was decided that with the approval and consent of Synod, their future church would be named St. Michael and All Angels.

Construction of the church building was completed in 1962 and nearly 38 years later the parish's Millennium Hall was constructed and ready for occupancy in 1999.

The celebration on September 29, 2019 was a great one! Former parishioners and clergy augmented the current congregation creating a festive reunion atmosphere.

Following the Processional Hymn, *Christ the Fair Glory*; the territorial acknowledgment giving thanks to the Kwantlen, Katzie, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen First Nations; the singing of the *Glory to God* and the opening prayers, Archbishop Skelton blessed the Holy Water in the Font and blessed the congregation with sprinkling of Holy Water from a cedar branch — The Asperges.

For her sermon text she took the Gospel, *Luke 8: 4-15*, *Christ the Sower*. Prior to beginning her homily, Archbishop Skelton made reference to the appropriateness of the Gospel message as it relates to the founding of a church 60 years ago.*

Organist, Coleen Whitmore leads the rehearsal of *Psalm 122* with cantors: warden, Jeddy James and rector, Archdeacon Louie Engnan. PHOTO Randy Murray

Gary Brown reads the Epistle, *Ephesians 4: 1-7, 11-16*. PHOTO Randy Murray

Archbishop Skelton at the Font, giving thanks for God's gift of water. PHOTO Randy Murray

Music in worship was led by St. Michael's Parish Choir, the Church Band, organized by Shelley Novak, guitarist/vocalist, Andy Whitmore and organist, Coleen Whitmore.

Corri Kaweski did double duty as Archbishop's Chaplain and Crucifer and was well supported by the other members of the sanctuary party, Servers Adam Giorgis and Bryce Engnan.

Assistant curate at St. Helen's, Surrey, Deacon, the Rev. Jonathan Pinkney was Deacon of the Word and Table.

The rector, the Ven. Louie Engnan was key to the flow of the liturgy taking on the roles of MC, Cantor and Administrator of Communion. He was assisted by visiting and returning clergy.

Following worship, it was time for a party and a party it was. Everyone gathered in the Millennium Hall for a fabulous "comfort food" buffet luncheon. There were two large trays of homemade lasagne, three homemade Shepherd's Pies and one gluten free Shepherd's Pie, freshly made Caesar salads and many more potluck staples. A highlight

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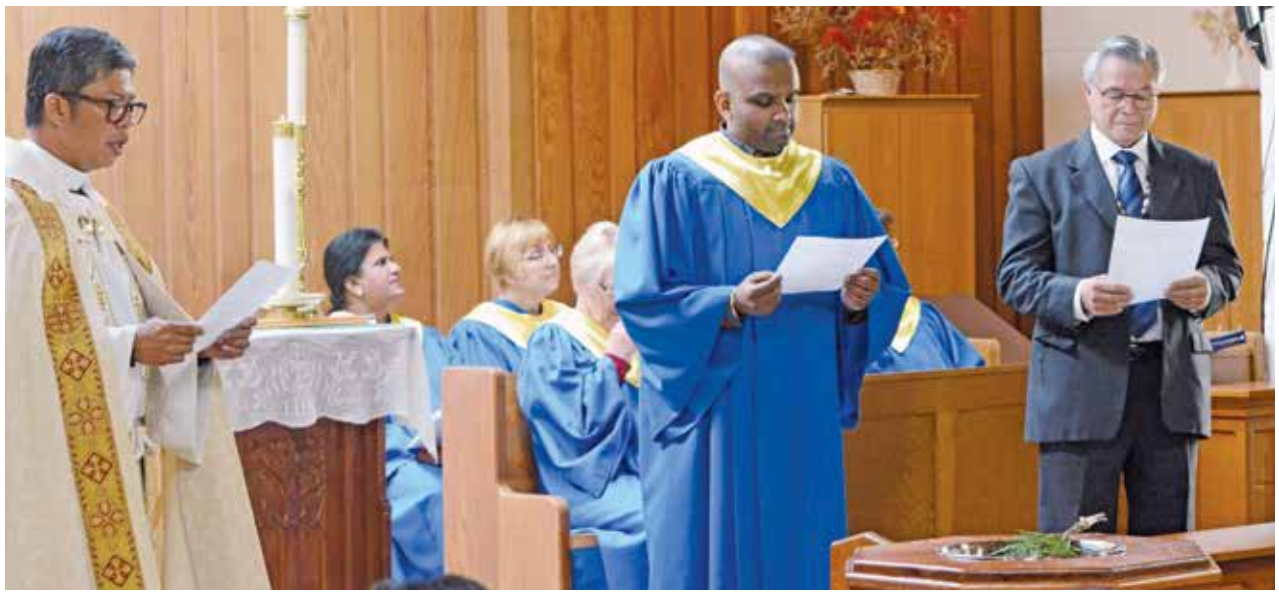
** A video of Archbishop Melissa Skelton's sermon is available on the diocesan website at https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/podcasts/media/2019-09-29-christ-jesus-the-sower.*

The Asperges. PHOTO Randy Murray



Archdeacon Engnan in the role of cantor leads *Psalm 22*, other cantors standing, Jeddy James and Andy Whitmore. PHOTO Randy Murray

Prior to the intercession the choir offers the anthem *Sing the Lord a Song*. PHOTO Randy Murray

Music ministry leaders playing the Offertory, *I Have Called You by Your Name*. PHOTO Randy Murray

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

of the meal was the slow cooker containing more than 20 cups of homemade gravy to top off the Shepherd's Pie.

After the lunch there was a PowerPoint presentation covering the history of the parish. The folks of St. Michael's have done an excellent job of preserving their history. It was great to see an original copy of the September 1961 *Anglican News*, the predecessor of *Topic* with photos and the story of Archbishop Godfrey Gower receiving the drawings from the architect and then fully vested breaking the ground for the construction of the church.

The 22 people who met on that summer night in 1959 were the stewards of the seed from the parable in Luke's Gospel, "the seed is the word of God." From that seed grew this community, that 60 years later meets at this place they envisioned where they continue to share the Eucharist and proclaim God's message of compassion and hope through Jesus Christ. A Holy Legacy. ✠

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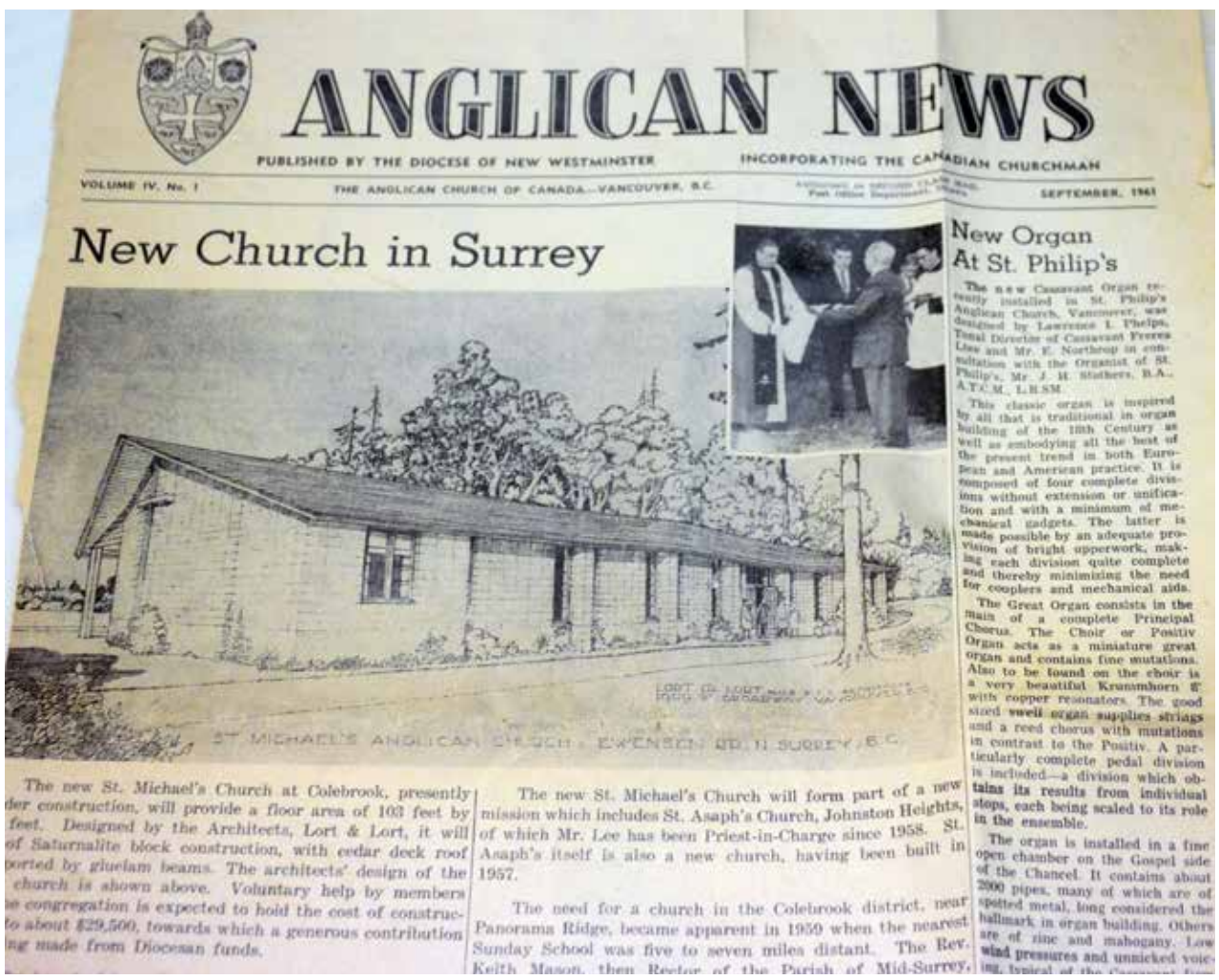
More photos of St. Michael's, Surrey 60 year celebration on page 6…

The Prayer Over the Gifts. PHOTO Randy Murray

The Eucharist. PHOTO Randy Murray



ANGLICAN NEWS

PUBLISHED BY THE DIOCESE OF NEW WESTMINSTER — INCORPORATING THE CANADIAN CHURCHMAN

VOLUME IV, No. 1 — THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA—VANCOUVER, B.C. — SEPTEMBER, 1961

New Church in Surrey

The new St. Michael's Church at Colebrook, presently der construction, will provide a floor area of 103 feet by feet. Designed by the Architects, Lort & Lort, it will of Saturnalite block construction, with cedar deck roof ported by glulam beams. The architects' design of the church is shown above. Voluntary help by members e congregation is expected to hold the cost of construc- to about $29,500, towards which a generous contribution ng made from Diocesan funds.

The new St. Michael's Church will form part of a new mission which includes St. Asaph's Church, Johnston Heights, of which Mr. Lee has been Priest-in-Charge since 1958. St. Asaph's itself is also a new church, having been built in 1957.

The need for a church in the Colebrook district, near Panorama Ridge, became apparent in 1959 when the nearest Sunday School was five to seven miles distant. The Rev. Keith Mason, then Rector of the Parish of Mid-Surrey,

New Organ At St. Philip's

The new Casavant Organ recently installed in St. Philip's Anglican Church, Vancouver, was designed by Lawrence L. Phelps, Tonal Director of Casavant Freres Ltee and Mr. E. Northrop in consultation with the Organist of St. Philip's, Mr. J. H. Stathers, B.A., A.T.C.M., L.R.S.M.

This classic organ is inspired by all that is traditional in organ building of the 18th Century as well as embodying all the best of the present trend in both European and American practice. It is composed of four complete divisions without extension or unification and with a minimum of mechanical gadgets. The latter is made possible by an adequate provision of bright upperwork, making each division quite complete and thereby minimizing the need for couplers and mechanical aids.

The Great Organ consists in the main of a complete Principal Chorus. The Choir or Positiv Organ acts as a miniature great organ and contains fine mutations. Also to be found on the choir is a very beautiful Krumahorn & with copper resonators. The good sized swell organ supplies strings and a reed chorus with mutations in contrast to the Positiv. A particularly complete pedal division is included—a division which obtains its results from individual stops, each being scaled to its role in the ensemble.

The organ is installed in a fine open chamber on the Gospel side of the Chancel. It contains about 2000 pipes, many of which are of spotted metal, long considered the hallmark in organ building. Others are of zinc and mahogany. Low wind pressures and unnicked voic-

Front page of the September 1961 *Anglican News* with the story about the ground-breaking of the new Surrey church. PHOTO Randy Murray

Home Blessing "Kits" for Epiphany

Rituals of faith, practiced at home, are one of the most formative ways parents can nurture the faith of their children. Recent studies conclude that the primary faith influence on children and youth are parents. The benefits of growing up in a spiritually enriching household are many.[1] Parishes have the privilege of equipping parents to offer these nurturing practices and the newly launched Children and Families Christian Formation Committee for the diocese wants to help parishes with that work.

At the December meeting of the committee, members put together a "kit" to invite families to pray and do a simple home blessing during the season of Epiphany. These kits are available to all parishes who would like to distribute them. The committee wanted to keep it simple and ready to use, both for parishes to subscribe to and for families to use.

The home blessing at Epiphany is a tradition many churches practice, but it may be new to others. The tradition marks the visit of the Magi to the home of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus from the gospel of Matthew *(Matthew 2:1-12)*. It's a simple, hands-on way to pray for Christ's blessing on all who visit and live in the home. The "kit" includes blessed chalk and a card with prayers and instructions on how to mark the doorway with the formula 20 + C + M + B + 20. The formula is rich in symbolism. The two "20s" represent the coming year which enclose the prayer: 2020. The "C", the "M", and the "B" have two meanings. The first and primary one is that they are the first letters of a prayer in Latin: *Christus mansionem benedicat = May Christ bless this home*. The second meaning is that they are the first letters of the names of the Magi according to legend: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

Children of all ages can participate in this and it could become a memorable practice for families every year. It comes after the hectic Christmas season, during the return to school, and into the doldrums of January. It takes less time than the drive to hockey practice and it's a daily visible reminder of the prayers made and the honour we have as Christian households to be places of welcome and warmth. Above all, it's a visible reminder of the Christ who greets and blesses us in our coming out and going in.

If you would like these home blessing packages for your parish, email the Missioner for Christian Formation, Jessica Schaap at jschaap@vancouver.anglican.ca or call 604.684.6306, ext. 225. They may be delivered by, or picked up from the diocesan office.

The blessing prayer:
God who leads your people
through the journey of life,
as you led Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar
to worship Jesus,
so, lead us to be fearless
in making Jesus known
in our homes and in our lives.
Bless this chalk
that those who see the blessing on our homes
may know that our doorways
are places of welcome and blessing
and that you are the God who blesses us every day.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, born of Mary,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever.
Amen.

[1] *For a survey of recent literature see John Roberto, "Best Practices in Family Faith Formation,"* Lifelong Faith. *Fall (2007). https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/family_faith_formation_-_lifelong_faith_journal.pdf*

Archbishop Melissa blesses the chalk. PHOTO Randy Murray

St. Michael's Surrey Celebrates 60 Years

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Receiving a blessing. PHOTO Randy Murray

Listing to the announcements following Communion. PHOTO Randy Murray

The comfort food line-up. PHOTO Randy Murray

The cake. PHOTO Randy Murray

Archbishop Skelton greets folks after worship.
PHOTO Randy Murray

Serving team bow their heads for the blessing. PHOTO Randy Murray

More than 20 cups of gravy. PHOTO Randy Murray

Everyone has a seat for lunch. PHOTO Randy Murray

care + share Advent 2019 Fundraising Campaign

ROBERTA FRASER
Interim Priest-in-Charge, St. Anne, Steveston; Campaign Manager, care + share Campaign

care + share has been helping to fund a wide variety of ministries in our diocese since 2011. The ministries are supported for a two-year period to help them to expand and strengthen their work. Every two years Synod selects and affirms from one to three recipients of the care + share donations for the next two-year cycle. At our 2019 Synod, a resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority to confirm the Urban Aboriginal Ministry (UAM) as the recipient of the care + share donations for January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021.

Cliff Caprani lines up a shot as Joan and Joanne from 127 Society for Housing speak to a friend on the street. PHOTO Randy Murray

Cliff wires up Fr. Matthew Johnson of Street Outreach Initiative at St. James' for his interview. PHOTO Randy Murray

Vicki Potter, ODNW and Deacon, the Rev. Dr. Pitman Potter of Westside Anglicans Neighbourhood Ministry. PHOTO Cliff Caprani

UAM had its beginnings a few years ago when Vivian Seegers began helping fellow First Nation's people who she knew were in need. In 2013, this informal ministry was formalized by the formation of the Urban Aboriginal Ministry. The now, Rev. Vivian Seegers, has been joined by volunteers both clergy and laity from her parish of St. Mary Magdalene and from other parishes around the diocese to expand the reach of the ministry. UAM reaches out to First Nations people from across Canada who are living here in Vancouver. These individuals sometimes find themselves in desperate situations and need support and help. The distance between their hometowns and villages and Vancouver causes a disconnect from community and culture and a space is needed where there is connection and support. UAM aims to provide a space to meet the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of each individual through a variety of means. These include events throughout the year that help people reconnect with their cultural heritage and native spirituality. UAM also provides practical assistance such as directing people to resources and assisting them to obtain needs like detox facilities, social services, housing and medical care as well as occasional "hands-on" help with basic life events like moving into housing, or providing transportation to medical appointments etc.

The need is great, and UAM was chosen as the sole beneficiary of care + share for this 2020–2021 cycle to help UAM expand to meet the needs of more of our First Nations brothers and sisters. Towards that end, the Mission and Ministry team of the diocese are launching a "mini-campaign" during the season of Advent 2019 to encourage the members of our diocese to support the care + share program. Although UAM will be the recipient during the next two-year funding cycle we hope that your participation now will contribute to a pattern of generosity that will enable future ministries from around the diocese to also flourish through care + share.

care + share is entirely funded by donations from individuals and parishes, so the supported ministries don't receive a set amount — instead they receive whatever voluntary contributions are given by you. The diocese supports care + share by paying all overhead for fundraising and administration from the diocesan budget, so that 100% of all donations to care + share go to the ministries being supported.

To help tell the care + share story our diocesan communications team have produced a short video. Through interviews with past, current and future recipients this short documentary highlights some of the ministry that has been enabled through care + share over the last few years. Support for care + share is an important part of our joint ministry as a diocese and we hope you will all take the time to watch the video, and that it will help you to prayerfully consider your financial support for this vital program. The film is available on the diocesan website at https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/careshare. We have included some photos of the filming with this article.

As we enter Advent and make ourselves ready to celebrate the gift of the coming of the Christ Child into our needy world, we invite you to include an ongoing gift to care + share as a part of your financial stewardship. To give, please contact Rachel Taylor at 604.684.6306, ext. 220 or by email at rtaylor@vancouver.anglican.ca.

Cliff gets St. Paul's warden, James Roberts in focus. PHOTO Randy Murray

Cliff wires up the Rev. Laurel Dykstra before a Salal + Cedar Outdoor Eucharist in Vancouver. PHOTO Randy Murray

Natalie King, Elder and Drumkeeper of UAM is in place for her video interview. PHOTO Randy Murray

Cliff shoots a still of Vicki Potter, ODNW and the Rev. Pitman Potter. PHOTO Randy Murray

Brandy, Rev. Vivian Seegers and Natalie King of UAM pose for a photograph outside of St. Mary Magdalene. PHOTO Randy Murray

Winter is Here… and so is the Gospel of Matthew

JESSICA SCHAAP
Missioner for Christian Formation, diocese of New Westminster

It's Year A. What does that mean? It means that since December 1, 2019, the gospel we hear from the most on Sundays will be the gospel according to Matthew. Year A will continue until November 28, 2020, just before Advent begins next year. Year B will follow with a focus on Luke and then Year C, which is devoted to Mark. We follow this cycle of Year A, B, and C: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, over and over again. And, what about John you ask? The Gospel of John gets inserted on Sundays in every year, and most often in the season of Easter.

So, this might be the year for you to spend more time with the gospel according to Matthew. If you're looking for a gospel that is focused on the nuts and bolts of being a disciple of Jesus, of getting along with the other disciples you travel with, and wondering about Jesus' relationship to his Jewishness, then this is the gospel for you. The gospel of Matthew is where you'll find the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, the story of the Magi, and heaps of quotes from and allusions to the Hebrew Bible.

To help with your study and reflection, here are **Five Guides to the Gospel of Matthew (and a film!)** that could accompany you and/or a small group.

The Five Guides

1. Matthew for Everyone (Part 1 and Part 2)[1] by N. T. Wright
   Accessible and inexpensive study guides by an Anglican bishop and one of the foremost New Testament scholars.

2. Journeying with Matthew – Year A[2] by James Woodward, Paula Gooder, Mark Pryce
   Designed for individuals or small groups to study all the Sunday gospel readings from Matthew. Good for those bible study groups that follow the lectionary.

3. Conversations with Scripture: The Gospel of Matthew[3] by John Yieh
   Part of a bible study series developed by Anglicans for Anglicans. This comes with a free study guide by Sharon Ely Pearson[4], a well-known Christian educator in the Episcopal church.

4. Discovering Matthew[5] by Ian Boxall
   This is much more scholarly and allows in-depth and multiple approaches to interpretation. This might work well for sermon prep.

5. Gospel of Matthew: God with Us[6] by the Kerygma program
   Designed for small groups, this is a 14-week bible study that delves into Matthew's gospel and its most significant themes. The course is interactive and highly participatory; it builds skills in biblical study. It comes with a leader resource book and DVD.

You can browse through all of these guides at the diocesan office. Just email the Missioner for Christian Formation, Rev. Jessica Schaap at jschaap@vancouver.anglican.bc.ca or call 604.684.6306, ext.225, to set up a time to come by.

More Possibilities for Matthew

If you wish to bring your focus to one part of Matthew's gospel, try the famous Beatitudes. They can reorient your life, and you can do them in a small group with the six-week course *Pilgrim: the Beatitudes*.[7] Each session includes opening prayer, reflection, discussion questions, scripture, and excerpts from church tradition. This year we will hear the Beatitudes from Matthew on Epiphany 4 (February 2, 2020). What a great time to kick off a short course too — in the doldrums of winter!

The Calling of Saint Matthew by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1599 – 1600). IMAGE public domain

Or, if reading is not your thing, get a group together and watch Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew*.[8] It's from 1964 in Italian with English subtitles, and considered one of the best films about the life of Christ ever made. It's still stirring and fresh. You can find it on YouTube or Google Play. ✠

1 *spckpublishing.co.uk/matthew-for-everyone-439*
2 *spckpublishing.co.uk/journeying-with-matthew*
3 *www.churchpublishing.org/gospelofmatthew*
4 *www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/conversations-with-scripture--the-gospel-of-matthew/cws-matthew.pdf*
5 *spckpublishing.co.uk/discovering-matthew*
6 *kerygma.com/products/matthew-ldr*
7 *www.pilgrimcourse.org/books/the-beatitudes-(book-4)*
8 *en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gospel_According_to_St._Matthew_(film)*

Synod Staff Transition Announcement from Archbishop Skelton

I write to let you know that Rob Dickson concluded his work and ministry as a staff member of the diocese of New Westminster October 31, 2019. In his more than 13 years serving as an employee of our diocese he has had two job titles: Business Administrator (2006–2017) and more recently, Director of Finance and Property.

Rob's career in the business world prior to his coming on staff at the diocese of New Westminster was extensive and the jobs that he took on were demanding. However, during all the years of his working life his most important commitment outside of his family was to the Anglican Church.

The list of Rob's many volunteer contributions to our diocese and to the National Church are huge, including: Treasurer and Warden of Christ Church Cathedral, Treasurer of the diocese of New Westminster, Delegate to numerous General Synods, chair and member of a number of Anglican Church of Canada committees and working groups including Finance Management and Pension. Rob currently serves on the General Synod Pension Committee and the Board of the Anglican Foundation.

He also served at the highest levels in the dioceses of Edmonton and Rupert's Land. A notable achievement was his participation on the team that negotiated the Indian Residential Schools settlement in 2005, that was subsequently implemented in 2007. It was widely noted that his "thoroughness and caring tenacity contributed to helping divert the path the National Church was on to bankruptcy." With others on that team, Rob helped craft a solution acceptable to both sides.

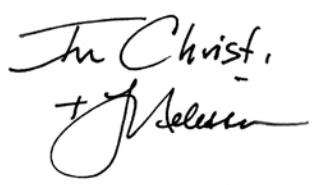
Rob Dickson. PHOTO Wayne Chose

His service to the National Church was recognized in 2010, when then-primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz visited the Parish of St. Christopher's, West Vancouver where Rob and his family worship to award Rob the Anglican Award of Merit. This award is conferred upon lay people who have made outstanding contributions to the National Church. In the history of this award, Rob is one of only three recipients from the diocese of New Westminster.

Rob brought that level of commitment to his work here at the diocese of New Westminster, often being the first to raise his hand and volunteer to help and contribute in any capacity, whether it was setting up and taking down chairs for a meeting or being one of the first cohort of students to attend and graduate from the Diocesan School for Parish Development.

Conversations with Rob about this change had been ongoing for six months prior to the announcement of the completion of his ministry, October 17. We will all miss Rob, both in the skills and experience he has brought to this important role and in what he has given of himself to the parishes and people of the diocese. In the Synod Office we will miss his outgoing and cheerful presence, his helpful opinions and perspectives on many matters related to our work, and his deep love of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Please join me in thanking Rob for his service and please keep him in your prayers as he transitions to the next phase of his work and ministry. ✠



Street Outreach volunteers Anna and Mary hand out sandwiches and packets on Vancouver's Westside. PHOTO Vicki Potter

Volunteers with the street team, Mary and Jane, receive contributions of packets, fresh eggs and sandwiches from St. John's, Shaughnessy parishioners Andrew and Alberta. PHOTO Vicki Potter

The Mobile Care Unit medical team provides care to a participant at the Kitsilano Showers Program. PHOTO Vicki Potter

Thankful, Hopeful, Faithful Ministry on Vancouver's Westside

PITMAN POTTER
Deacon, Vancouver Archdeaconry; Clergy Leader, Westside Anglicans Neighbourhood Ministry

As of December 31, 2019, the Westside Anglicans Neighbourhood Ministry Mobile Care Unit program concludes its two years as a recipient of care + share, the diocese of New Westminster's shared diocesan outreach program. Ministries included in care + share do not receive "funding," instead they receive voluntary contributions made by parishes and individual Anglicans, sent to the Diocesan Office which forwards funds several times a year to the care + share ministry group or groups. Donations given by individuals and parishes to care + share go 100% to the ministries we support. The overhead for fundraising and administration for care + share is included in the regular Diocesan Budget, and not taken from donations. Diocesan communications made a request to the leaders of the "Neighbourhood Ministry" to submit a piece reporting on the ministry as their time with care + share wraps up. They were kind enough to contribute the following. • Editor

The Neighbourhood Ministry is an outreach program on Vancouver's Westside offered by the parishes of St. Anselm's, St. Helen's, St. John's, Shaughnessy and St. Philip's. Since 2008, the Ministry has offered care, compassion and practical assistance to homeless and vulnerable people in their area. The Neighbourhood Ministry began with a vision of offering fellowship and assistance to the needy on our streets. Today, the Saturday street outreach ministry involves dozens of volunteers who collect, package and distribute fresh food, canned goods, sundries and seasonal clothing to those in need.

Immense Joy. Hope. Humility. These are just some of the words volunteers use to describe their experience serving with the Westside Anglicans Neighbourhood Ministry. Says volunteer, Shirin Theophilus, ODNW, "This ministry is the reflection of the spirituality of compassion linked to the caring for the vulnerable, poor and homeless and doing justice in the world. The reality is that amongst great wealth in the Westside of Vancouver, we coexist with extreme poverty."

The Rev. Karin Fulcher, who helps prepare fresh food for the outings, commented, "I always buy the very best free-range large eggs that I can find, and hope that they will bring nourishment to those who receive them!" Said Rhona Thornton, street volunteer, about the people they meet, "People are always grateful for what we have to offer and despite their circumstances are often cheerful and chatty. I think that this interaction makes them feel less invisible and that it is as much about the company as it is about the supplies we offer. My life has truly been enriched by my work with this ministry and I get at least as much out of this work as do those we serve."

Four years ago, the Neighbourhood Ministry initiated a Mobile Care Unit (MCU) program, partnering with the UBC Schools of Medicine and Social Work. The MCU has teams of doctors, medical residents, social work students and church volunteers placed at community meals on the Westside, who assist clients with basic medical issues and social service concerns. For Vicki Potter, ODNW, team leader at the St. Augustine's Marpole community meal, "It is a highlight of my week to serve the folks who come to St. Augustine's for a hot dinner and fellowship. There is so much need out there, and it is humbling to see the respect and gratitude so evident amongst the meal guests, even those who have so little. To be able to help someone access housing, or understand how senior's benefits work, or even to offer a listening ear, it reminds me every time what life is really about."

care + share has made a tremendous impact on the ability of the Mobile Care Unit to get off the ground, support volunteers, and develop important protocols and systems. The financial support allowed the Neighbourhood Ministry to hire a part-time staff person to help with volunteer communications, training sessions and client file management. Training for MCU volunteers is extensive, covering topics such as the theology of our ministry, listening skills, client needs assessment and understanding the myriad of government programs and how to access them. Maintaining proper client files is critical to ensure client privacy, correct channeling of information to the right government offices, and follow up on behalf of clients who often lack reliable contact information.

Fostering partnerships is an important part of the Neighbourhood Ministry. The impact of joining four parishes together in service has been huge, creating bonds between people who now feel like family. Partnerships through the Mobile Care Unit, with UBC, other non-profit organizations, and government organizations, has shown what we can do if we pull together and pool our most important resource — people.

As our time with care + share draws to a close, I would like to thank on behalf of the Neighbourhood Ministry the innumerable faithful supporters who have donated so generously of their time, treasure, and faithful presence to develop and steward this ministry. You have helped transform the lives of so many people through your generosity.

Blessings to all. ✠

"It is a highlight of my week to serve the folks who come to St. Augustine's for a hot dinner and fellowship. There is so much need out there, and it is humbling to see the respect and gratitude so evident amongst the meal guests, even those who have so little. To be able to help someone access housing, or understand how senior's benefits work, or even to offer a listening ear, it reminds me every time what life is really about."

Vicki Potter, ODNW, team leader
at the St. Augustine's Marpole community meal

Volunteers Suzi, Heather and Ellie help serve a Thanksgiving feast at the Dunbar apartments. PHOTO Vicki Potter

LEFT A younger member of the parish lights an altar candle. RIGHT The pulpit and chancel entrance decorations. PHOTOS Randy Murray

Harvest Thanksgiving 2019 • A Sampler

RANDY MURRAY
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

St. George, Fort Langley

For Harvest Thanksgiving 2019, I visited the Parish of St. George, Fort Langley for their main Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Although the Fraser Valley continues to develop as a collection of towns with growing populations, it is a part of our diocese that has largely retained its rural charm and character. And in this modern technological age there is a calm and comfort to being at a Celebration of the Eucharist in a place adjacent to fields and farms where gratitude for the abundance that God has provided us in the context of that centuries old practice, the harvest, has special significance, and a closer proximity to the gathering of those gifts which nurture and nourish us.

It was an overcast and chilly early fall day, Sunday, October 13. The nave and chancel of St. George's were beautifully decorated, each stained-glass frame displayed a harvest themed window treatment; a classic cornucopia display framed by the finished wood of the altar was a feature of the numerous decorations in the chancel and chancel entrance including the pulpit and votive candle rack. There is definitely some talent and skill in the parish when it comes to festive decorating.

The congregation on that Sunday (and most Sundays I suspect) was truly intergenerational, young, older and everything in between. Prior to the Procession, the clergy, deacon, the Rev. Karen Saunders and rector, the Rev. Kelly Duncan welcomed those gathered to Harvest Thanksgiving worship where they shared information about the ongoing mission and ministry of the parish.

Following the Opening Hymn, *All Creatures of Our God and King* and the Gathering of the Community with prayers, there was the commissioning of the Sunday School in the chancel. A goodly number of younger members of the parish, musicians, lay people serving as ministers of Sunday School and the clergy gathered and led the singing of "This is the day, this is the day that our God has made, we will rejoice…"

The Gospel for the liturgy proclaimed by Rev. Saunders was *John 6:25-35, Jesus, the Bread of Life.*

The Rev. Kelly Duncan took the message of the Gospel for her text, incorporating the message from scripture into the Harvest Thanksgiving theme. She discussed the early history of Thanksgiving in Canada and spoke about different theologians and author's takes on gratitude. The final paragraphs of her homily connected the themes of gratitude (which "unites us"); Jesus, the bread of life; the Eucharist, and Christian service:

"We are about to enjoy a meal together this morning — the bread and the wine of Communion.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Two flutes blend to create a prayerful environment for worship before the procession. More decorations in the chancel are visible. PHOTO Randy Murray

Deacon, the Rev. Karen Saunders reports on the mission and ministry of the parish prior to worship, "The Work of the Community." PHOTO Randy Murray

LEFT All in place singing the Opening Hymn. RIGHT Rev. Saunders processes into the nave during the Gradual Hymn, *Lord We Hear Your Word with Gladness* prior to proclaiming the Gospel, *John 6:25-35*. PHOTOS Randy Murray

The Rev. Kelly Duncan preaching.
PHOTO Randy Murray

Rev. Saunders administers Holy Communion.
PHOTO Randy Murray

Clergy greet the parish following the Dismissal.
PHOTO Randy Murray

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

As we come together before God, we remind ourselves and each other of God's love for each of us. In the very act of eating and drinking, we draw closer to God and are invited to recognize our own blessedness. Jesus was not into hierarchies or titles or status. Instead, he was into eating together, bringing around the table:

- the rich and the poor,
- the religious leader and the pauper,
- those who felt themselves worthy of his attention and love

and those who did not —

As we line up shoulder to shoulder at the Communion rail, we are reminded that we are all welcome here.

St. George, Fort Langley, Harvest Thanksgiving, October 13, 2019. PHOTO Randy Murray

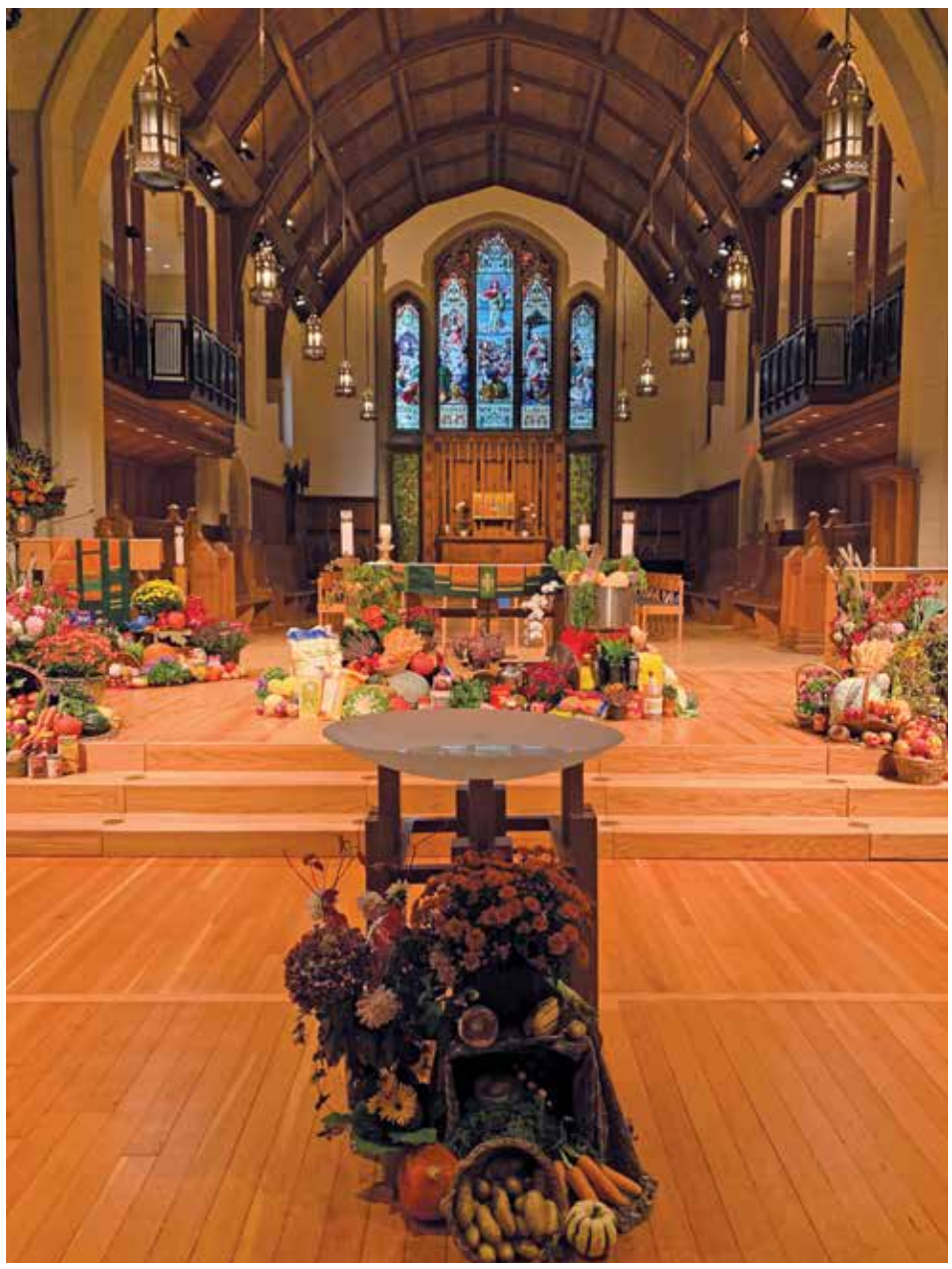
We give thanks together here. Eucharist, after all, is the Greek word that means *Thanksgiving*. As we do so, we participate in the biggest paradox of all. We receive the Body of Christ so that we might become the Body of Christ to the world. We are fed in order that we can feed others." ⌖

St. Stephen, West Vancouver
SUBMISSION Hilary Clary

There were definitely two sides *(Janus-like)* to the Harvest Thanksgiving service at St. Stephen, West Vancouver led by rector, Canon Jonathon LLoyd. On one hand there were the glories of the harvest being displayed on the altar, as a look back to the summer, and then in the other direction, a gaze toward the upcoming winter, with the storage of the year's harvest symbolized by a variety of fruit and vegetables. For Harvest Thanksgiving 2019, the liturgy included the baptism of a member of the congregation. As a Eucharist with Baptisms always includes the reaffirmation of our baptismal covenant, it was a blessing for the congregation to support a member of the parish as they came forward for baptism, making a commitment to join the Body of Christ. The organ postlude played by Minister of Music, Dr. Annabelle Paetsch was appropriately titled: *Nun danket alle Gott (Now thank we all our God)* by Karg-Elert. ⌖

Christ Church Cathedral

The decorations for Harvest Thanksgiving at Christ Church Cathedral were more spectacular than ever. Many thanks to Jane Dittrich for submitting the two photos included with this article. ⌖



TOP & BOTTOM Views of the chancel platform and chancel (altar) at Christ Church Cathedral. PHOTOS Jane Dittrich

St. Stephen's Altar Guild members: Sharon Wright, Margaret Rolfe, Anne Morley, and Wendy Bain.
PHOTO Courtesy of Margaret Rolfe

Rector, Canon Jonathan LLoyd takes a bite of an apple.
PHOTO Courtesy of Margaret Rolfe

Dave Parry and Margaret McAvity pose with Eritrean friends. PHOTO Submitted

Walking the labyrinth on a beautiful fall day. PHOTO Submitted

"Dabbing." PHOTO Submitted

About to draw and do some colouring. PHOTO Submitted

Always time for soccer. PHOTO Submitted

Dave, Mambo and Majed. PHOTO Submitted

Leena preps some vegetables for the Syrian meal. PHOTO Submitted

A Journey Towards Hope

Thanksgiving Retreat for Newcomers at Rivendell Retreat Centre

WILNA PARRY, ODNW
St. Clement's, Lynn Valley

This past Thanksgiving was like no other for the 46 people (including ten leaders and helpers) gathered together at Rivendell Retreat Centre on Bowen Island. We were on a journey towards finding hope and rest amidst the peace and beauty of Rivendell. The overall objective was to provide newcomers with a safe "away" place to allow them time and space to reflect and talk about what they have had to leave behind; to encourage them to express losses and hopes that may have remained hidden in the pressure of trying to adapt to life in a new country. The process of talking about past events and moving into a place of hope is an important step in healing.

Friday morning, October 11, saw an early start for six families from Eritrea. All gathered at a local school in Burnaby, they made their way via SkyTrain and bus to Horseshoe Bay boarding the Bowen Island ferry to Snug Cove. It must have been a challenge to keep such a large group with parents and 18 children under the age of 16 together, but Mambo and Sosina did just that. Two Syrian families had arrived earlier at Rivendell and were in the process of settling in.

A convoy of cars picked people up from the dock transporting them to Rivendell, where the door stood open in welcome. It was a beautiful, perfect fall day—enhancing this opportunity for many Eritreans to travel on the ferry and experience the sunshine, fresh air and beautiful surroundings of Cates Hill. After lunch, everyone was invited to settle into their rooms. The younger folks played Frisbee and soccer outside, the mums sat in the sun and braided their hair and some dads chopped wood for the fireplace.

Friday night's dinner, a feast of traditional food was prepared by the Syrian families. A blessing in Arabic was said over the meal and afterwards thanks were expressed by a member of the Eritrean community. A similar procedure was followed the next night when the Eritrean families prepared the meal and were thanked by a member of one of the Syrian families.

Saturday morning was our first formal program: the adults gathered for the morning with Maggie and Mambo where they were invited to share stories of their journey to Canada; what it is like for their family in Canada. The younger teens went off for art therapy with an expert in the field while the older teens were treated to a vigorous hike around Killarney Lake. The group of "tweens" (6–11 years) had story time with Margaret, and a walk around the labyrinth.

After lunch it was time for families to relax and get to know each other. Saturday's dinner was prepared by the Eritrean folk and we celebrated the seventh birthday of Hiwet with cake and candles. Afterwards folks gathered around a roaring fire to share stories and relax.

Sunday morning was the second session for adults; a prayer was woven together by reflections on the beauty of their surroundings; meeting and making new friends and gratitude for the hospitality shown by Rivendell and hosts. The older teens continued with the art and the younger ones had their turn at hiking to Killarney Lake, visiting "Opa" (a one thousand-year-old Hemlock) and spending some time on the beach.

> *"A great silence descended upon the lodge after everyone had left. Although we, as facilitators did not experience Thanksgiving with our families, we believe that for a couple of days Rivendell was a place where, 'Weariness fell from (them) soon in that house, and (they) had many a merry jest and dance, early and late, with the elves of the valley.* (*The Hobbit*, Chapter 19)'"
>
> Wilna Parry

Margaret, Todd and I were kept busy Sunday afternoon, preparing a traditional Canadian Thanksgiving meal: turkeys (halal) with stuffing, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, Brussels Sprouts, peas, yam and apple casserole and, of course, gravy. Many of our guests have never experienced a Canadian thanksgiving meal and almost every cell phone came out to snap pictures of the turkey. Everyone tucked in with gusto and came back for more. The pumpkin pie was less of a hit with the children, but they enjoyed the ice cream! The roaring fire added to the overall ambience.

Monday morning everyone was up early, cleaning rooms, packing up and getting down to the dock in time for the 11am ferry and travelling home.

A great silence descended upon the lodge after everyone had left. Although we, as facilitators did not experience Thanksgiving with our families, we believe that for a couple of days Rivendell was a place where, "Weariness fell from (them) soon in that house, and (they) had many a merry jest and dance, early and late, with the elves of the valley." (*The Hobbit*, Chapter 19)

Grateful thanks to the program and financial leaders of the diocese of New Westminster for providing a grant to make this dream a reality; the Rivendell Society for providing Rivendell lodge and cottage for our use and to all the many people who contributed lunches, cookies, snacks, fruit, rides and so much more. It would have been impossible without your generous support.

The folks involved in leadership of the retreat included: facilitators, Mambo Masinda and Rev. Margaret (Maggie) Marquardt; translator and assistant, Sosina Yiuzaw; Rivendell hosts, my spouse Dave and I, Marks and Margaret McAvity; art therapists, Laura Brook and Annie; and chef, Todd Kenneth.

Honada with the fresh veggies. PHOTO Submitted

Canadian Thanksgiving Turkey Dinner, Wilna (the author), Margaret, Majed and Dave. PHOTO Submitted

Syrian food. PHOTO Submitted

Fall 2019 Synod Staff Morning • Highlights

RANDY MURRAY (PREPARED WITH FILES FROM JESSICA SCHAAP & ARCHBISHOP MELISSA SKELTON)
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

Twice a year the Synod staff of the diocese of New Westminster meets for an extended period during a workday to connect, share information about each staff member's work and ministry, plan for the future, ask questions and generate some topics for discussion. These topics are usually but not always addressed by the Leadership Team led by Archbishop Skelton. There is a team building exercise, birthday celebrations for those staff members having birthdays in the month the Staff Day takes place and always a favourite, a catered lunch.

The fall 2019 version of Staff Day took place on Wednesday, October 16, and due to some tight scheduling around availability, the "Day" was abbreviated to a Staff "Morning."

After opening prayers and the territorial acknowledgement, Archbishop Skelton went to the flipchart and solicited topics for discussion. They included: a follow up to the October 2 departure of long time administrator and receptionist, Phil Colvin and how his absence might impact diocesan staff; the draft communications policies that are being developed by the communications officer with oversight by executive archdeacon, the Ven. Douglas Fenton; updates about the building at 1410 Nanton Avenue where the offices are located and its administration and maintenance; sharing information about staff roles primarily for the benefit of the recently arrived building administration team of Regan Gormand and Arlene Hyrniuk; and a briefing from the archbishop as follow up to the decisions made at General Synod 2019

The team building component for the October "Day" was a bit different than the usual with the Rev. Jessica Schaap, Missioner for Christian Formation facilitating a Godly Play presentation. For those of you who aren't familiar, Godly Play has for the past several years been promoted by the diocesan Mission and Ministry team as a preferred Christian Formation program for children. It is a Montessori based approach to spiritual formation that involves storytelling, prayer, art, silence and liturgy which serve as an introduction to the life of faith, and the rhythm of worship and religious language. Godly Play is based upon the recognition that children have an innate sense of the presence of God. All they lack is the appropriate language to help them identify and express it so it can be explored and strengthened. The Godly Play approach teaches classical Christian language in a way that enhances the child's authentic experience of God so it can contribute to the creative life of the child and the world.

Godly Play has a process where children are invited to prepare to enter the space where they will experience and participate in Godly Play much like a congregation is asked to prepare themselves for worship prior to the beginning of a liturgy. The bible story is not told to entertain but to communicate the scriptural events, engage a young person's natural propensity for theological thought and to encourage their participation.

The Synod Staff sat on the floor or on chairs, gathered in a horseshoe shape as Jessica told the story with the Godly Play sandbox, figurines, cloth representations of rivers and geometric solids representing buildings and borders.

In the story (lesson) Jessica illustrated, there were five scriptural references connected to this one Godly Play event: *2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36:13-23, Ezra, Nehemiah* and *Psalm 137*.

The second major agenda item was led by Archbishop Skelton as she presented a summary of Safe Church training implementation in the Ecclesiastical Province of BC/Yukon. The Ecclesiastical Province formed a Working Group in 2016, and their efforts led them to Praesidium: a US based company with over 20 years of experience in the field of abuse risk management who supply organizations with online training to prevent abuse and misconduct. Praesidium proposed their *Armatus® Learn to Protect System* training program for use in the Ecclesiastical Province. It is currently in use in major ways as the system used to deliver the Catholic Church's *Called to Protect* curriculum and the Episcopal Church's *Safeguarding God's Children*.

Provincial Synod approved adoption of the *Armatus®* system in the fall of 2018, and the officers of Provincial Synod worked through the first half of 2019 to complete contracts and coordinate all the information required from each diocese, the Territory of the People (former diocese of Cariboo) and the Sorrento Centre. *Armatus®* is now up and running and each diocese is introducing the system in their own way.

Archbishop Skelton using a laptop and a digital projector, illustrated some of the modules of the online training program and highlighted some specific additions to the program for the diocese of New Westminster. The program went live in the diocese November 1 which was perfect timing as it coincided with the beginning of the archbishop's study leave (November and December). After the demonstration, Archbishop Skelton acknowledged the work of Phil Colvin who had continued working on this project on a contract basis following his departure from his Synod staff position.

Ask your parish clergy and trustees for more information about Safe Church training and the *Armatus®* system .

The lunch part of the Staff Morning was a delicious assortment of Caribbean food and the birthday celebrant was Synod staff's building administrator, Regan Gorman — AKA: Mr. Fix-it. ✠

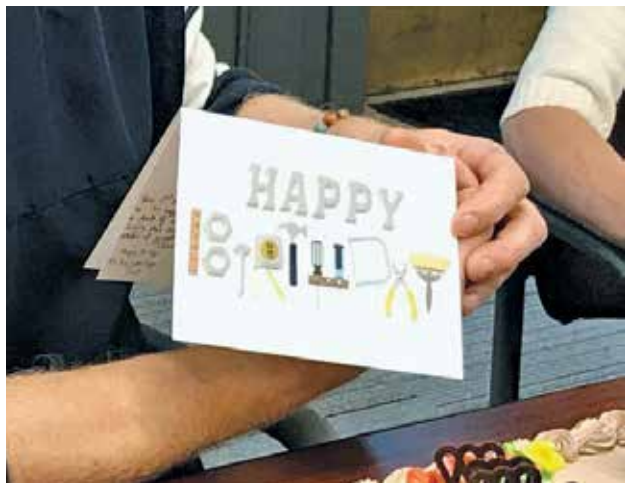
Synod Staff is in place for Godly Play. PHOTO Randy Murray

LEFT The Rev. Jessica Schaap prepares to lead a Godly Play session. RIGHT The Godly Play elements are in place. PHOTOS Randy Murray

Archbishop Skelton demonstrates *Armatus® Learn to Protect System* online training. PHOTO Randy Murray

Regan Gorman and Michèle van Teunenbroek. PHOTO Nii K'an Kwsdins (Jerry Adams)

The Mr. Fix-it Cake. PHOTO Nii K'an Kwsdins (Jerry Adams)



Regan Gorman's birthday card close-up. PHOTO Nii K'an Kwsdins (Jerry Adams)

An Interview with Rob Dickson

On October 31, 2019, Rob Dickson, AAM concluded 13+ years as a member of the staff Leadership Team at the diocese of New Westminster. His title, Director of Finance and Property. For more detailed information about Rob's extraordinary career as a diocesan employee and his overall commitment and contributions to the Anglican Church of Canada please read Archbishop Skelton's announcement on page 8 of this issue of *Topic*.

Rob was kind enough to take some time and answer some questions about his history, work and ministry and share some additional information with *Topic* readers.

Q. How did you come to make a lifelong commitment of service to the Anglican Church?

A. I am a cradle Anglican. My family was very committed to parish life and I became part of that commitment from which my faith grew. The person in my life of greatest faith was my paternal grandmother. She had an abiding faith that was a beacon for our family. My father was ordained late in life and my uncle was chancellor of his diocese. My mother was a tireless volunteer, engaging in ministry directed to parishes in Canada and Mexico throughout her life.

Q. How did your life in business prepare you for your ministry as a volunteer in the church, and… how did that experience prepare you for service as a diocesan employee?

A. I have always been involved with management, finance and sales in the commercial world which meant that I was always involved with people. Those skills carried into my volunteer life with the church and other organizations. They were skills that leant themselves to the volunteer positions I have held in the church and my work in the diocesan office.

Q. What do you recall was your greatest challenge in your work and in your ministry?

A. Probably the greatest challenge in my commercial career was being forced to assist in winding down the company that had employed me for 33 years and subsequently laying off the many employees in the division I led.

The greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity to serve in my ministry was as a member of the team dealing with the Federal Government, regarding the Residential Schools Settlement and helping to prevent the imminent bankruptcy of the Anglican Church of Canada. It was an honour to be a member of this superb collection of experts, but the stress was significant.

Q. Who in the church inspires or inspired you?

A. This is very hard to answer as I have been blessed to have known many priests, bishops, and lay people who are, or have been inspirational in my life. I would name Canon Herb O'Driscoll, the late Bishop Jim Cruickshank, Bishop Michael Ingham, Archbishop Douglas Hambidge and Archbishop Fred Hiltz. All these leaders have been central in my life, and also in the life of my family. All were instrumental in encouraging me to be an active volunteer at various levels of our church life.

Q. As a "high level" volunteer for almost 50 years and as a staff member of a diocese for more than 13 of those years, you have a unique perspective. Did you approach those two roles differently?

A. Yes, these are two very different roles in our church. The volunteer positions are central in our church system of governance and the paid positions of lay people are usually as support to the organization, particularly parishes and therefore by extension those volunteers serving the church.

Q. What is your single most memorable church related experience?

A. I have to name two events. One, was attending the first ordination of women in our diocese in 1976, and the second was the outstanding response of all the dioceses in the Canadian church to the request to take on the responsibility of the Anglican Residential Schools Settlement *(Honouring Our Commitment)*. The negotiating team had advised the Government of Canada that it would take up to three years for all the dioceses in Canada to ratify the Agreement. In under 90 days the ratification by all dioceses was complete. This was the largest financial responsibility ever undertaken by the Anglican Church of Canada.

Q. How has the church changed during your decades of involvement?

A. The church has changed in many ways. The numbers have decreased for those attending mainstream protestant churches and even those in reformed congregations. Church attendance has been sidelined succumbing to the imperatives of our current society. Having said that, we are still blessed to have many committed Christians in our faith communities who seek to bring the word of God to their greater community and to fulfill that part of their baptismal covenant that directs us to help the less fortunate in all corners of society.

Q. What does the future hold for Rob Dickson?

A. My current popular initial response as of this writing is "that is a good question!" I had knee replacement surgery in late August 2019, and I am working to see my new knee strengthened for skiing this winter. And, I am hoping to spend more time at our family summer camp in Northwestern Ontario. Beyond that, I remain active and involved in the church, serving in a number of elected positions at the parish, diocesan and national levels.

Happy as I am in these volunteer roles, I will be looking to see what other opportunities there are for me to share my skills and experience with other organizations.

Rob at the desk in the Director of Finance and Property office at 1410 Nanton Avenue, behind the legendary "piles of files." PHOTO Randy Murray

LEFT Rob on a paddleboard near the family cottage, Lake-of-the-Woods, Ontario. RIGHT Skiing at Whistler. PHOTOS Submitted

On vacation in Mexico. PHOTO Submitted

DIOCESAN SCHOOL
FOR PARISH DEVELOPMENT

The Week-long and Weekend Programs return in 2020

The Week-long Program dates are: June 14 – 20, 2020
at St. Mary's, Kerrisdale located at 2490 West 37th Avenue

The Weekend Program dates are:
April 25 – 26 • May 29 – 30 • September 25 – 26 • November 13 – 14, 2020
at the Synod Office located at 1410 Nanton Avenue

Visit the school's pages on the diocesan website at
www.vancouver.anglican.ca/parish-development/school-for-parish-development
for current program, registration and contact information.

Diocese of New Westminster
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Street Outreach Initiative Luncheon

Diocesan Ministry Celebrates 14 Years of Outreach

RANDY MURRAY (PREPARED WITH FILES FROM ANNA WOOD)
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

Tuesday, October 22, 2019, just prior to 12 noon, 50 invited guests and their hosts gathered in the Trendell Lounge at the Synod Office for a special luncheon reception hosted by Archbishop Melissa Skelton celebrating 14 years of the Street Outreach Initiative (SOI).

SOI is a partnership ministry supported by St. James', the diocese of New Westminster, trusts, private and corporate donors and other churches and organizations in the diocese and beyond.

The principal purpose of SOI is to place an Anglican priest on the streets of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside to reach out to, and create an environment where, connections can be made specifically with "street-involved" adults. The priest is the Rev. Fr. Matthew Johnson and he is assisted and supported by administrative assistant, Anna Wood; St. James' deacon, the Rev. Joyce Locht, a clinical counsellor; and he is also very much helped by St. James' rector, the Ven. Kevin Hunt, assistant curate, the Rev. Lucy Price and the parishioners of St. James'. Synod administration and finance staff also bring their skills to support SOI.

The people that SOI seeks to reach out to struggle with enormous burdens: mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, extreme poverty, often homelessness, but the overall condition is trauma.

The luncheon was organized by Pamela McElheran with the help of others and the primary purpose was to thank the donors and partners and bring them up-to-date on the ministry.

Prior to lunch being served, Elder Kelvin Bee, ODNW, member and trustee of the Parish of St. James', offered prayers and a territorial acknowledgement. He also introduced the St. James' clergy and asked them to stand and be recognized for their ministry to those who suffer from the various effects of trauma not only on the Downtown Eastside but to all those who seek help and comfort.

There was a delicious buffet consisting of salads, open faced sandwiches, mini quiches followed by delicious cookies, tarts, squares and more.

The programme was simple and consisted of a brief report on current history from Fr. Matthew, an endorsement of the ministry by Archbishop Skelton (who addressed the guests while displaying a cheque in one hand) leading into the screening of a 25 minute promotional film about the ministry produced by documentary filmmaker Cliff Caprani. Cliff is a member of All Saints', Ladner and he has been very generous over the past ten+ years, sharing his skill and talent with diocesan communications.

On display in the Trendell Lounge were some of the "tools of the trade" — first aid supplies, bottled water, prayer cards, emergency meal tickets, a rosary and a packet of cigarettes, but as attendees were reminded by the speakers who shared their experiences at the luncheon and also by the interviewees in the film, it is very much the presence of Fr. Matthew in the neighbourhood that gives the ministry its impact.

Following the screening of the film, Fr. Matthew made himself available for a Q&A session. Some of the questions had to do with the availability of the film in order to give it a wider audience and promote the ministry. The film is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Watching the film. PHOTO Randy Murray

LEFT Elder Kelvin Bee, ODNW brings Fr. Matthew up to the front after he had offered a prayer and territorial acknowledgment. RIGHT During his address Kelvin Bee asked the St. James' clergy to stand and be recognized. The Rev. Lucy Price is standing, and in the background, we see diocesan Missioner for Indigenous Justice Ministries, Nii K'an Kwsdins. PHOTOS Randy Murray

Caterer Kate Rice describes the buffet. PHOTO Randy Murray

Synod Staff and members of St. James' at lunch. PHOTO Randy Murray

Lunch is served. PHOTO Randy Murray

Farewell Luncheon for Phil!

RANDY MURRAY (PREPARED WITH FILES FROM ARCHBISHOP MELISSA SKELTON & EXECUTIVE ARCHDEACON DOUGLAS FENTON)
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

Monday, September 30, 2019 was Orange Shirt Day, a day to remember the tragic legacy of the Indian Residential Schools and to affirm that "Every Child Matters." At the Synod Office of the diocese of New Westminster it was also the day when staff members present from both the Synod Office and St. John's, Shaughnessy gathered for a meal in honour of the *soon-to-depart* Phil Colvin, Administrative Assistant/Reception/Screening in Faith Facilitator for our diocese.

On September 23, Phil gave notice to Archbishop Skelton that he would be leaving Synod staff as of October 2 in order to take up a position at Collingwood School in West Vancouver.

Phil began his role in the diocese in 2008 as Diocesan Youth Coordinator, part time, and was later appointed to the full-time position in January of 2014. Throughout his 11 years as a member of Synod staff he has worked diligently with those engaged in ministry for and with youth, he has been the first line of hospitable and helpful contact between the Synod Office and the public, he has overseen the Safe Church program, he has expertly organized Synod and other large events and he has competently and efficiently provided administrative support for countless other activities. He was a skilled and helpful liaison between the two Nanton Avenue organizations and was integral to the process of training and assisting building administration personnel.

On Synod staff his job was comprehensive with many responsibilities, but he always took the time to help others, from computer hardware and software set-up and installation — to minor and major event and conference planning — to expert proofreading of diocesan communiques and publications.

Phil is a person of broad and diverse tastes and interests, and curry is one of them. So, for his luncheon, curry of the Thai variety was featured, along with Pad Thai and a variety of other delicious dishes.

There were 14 in attendance at the luncheon including Archbishop Skelton who was present via the phone from Arizona where she was facilitating a conference. Everyone spoke about Phil's outstanding service, skills, helpfulness and leadership. In many ways Phil was the voice and the face of the diocese for almost six years and we couldn't have asked for a better representative. The last to speak was Executive Archdeacon, the Ven. Douglas Fenton who was at one time Phil's direct supervisor. In addition to presenting Phil with cards and gifts from the diocese and staff, he said that although he is sad to lose Phil, he is glad that Phil is moving forward in his career. Archdeacon Fenton also added that Phil has agreed to a short-term contract to continue the work toward implementation of the new Safe Church process that will be used throughout the Ecclesiastical Province of BC/Yukon. However it was Bill Siksay, Executive Assistant to the Archbishop and Executive Archdeacon's Office, who is a former Federal MP and before that an MP's Administrative Assistant and Constituency Secretary who made the definitive statement saying that "Phil is the best administrator" that he has worked with in his career.

Phil will be missed. All are encouraged to join in thanking him for all he has done for the diocese of New Westminster and also to keep Phil and his family in your prayers as they experience a time of transition. ✠

Rachel Taylor and Phil pop the tops of the food containers. PHOTO Randy Murray

The guest of honour goes first. PHOTO Randy Murray

LEFT Members of Synod and St. John's, Shaughnessy staff queue up for lunch. RIGHT Phil smiles as Archdeacon Fenton leads the applause. PHOTOS Randy Murray

Street Outreach Initiative Luncheon

Diocesan Ministry Celebrates 14 Years of Outreach

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

available and can be shown to parishes and groups as part of SOI's ongoing fundraising initiatives.

Fr. Matthew also elaborated on earlier comments he had made about the design and implementation of trauma education workshops as part of SOI, widening the ministries focus. SOI administrative assistant, Anna Wood had this to say about these innovative programs:

"To compliment the weekly rhythms of the pastoral and sacramental care offered to street involved adults and their families, Fr. Matthew, along with clinical counsellor Deacon Joyce Locht, have collaborated with psychologist Antonio Guzman, an experienced counsellor and educator, in delivering a number of trauma education workshops he has developed. Even more than mental illness or addiction in themselves, a history of trauma is perhaps the most common factor affecting street-involved men and women in the Downtown Eastside. Through these trauma workshops, participants acquire insight into their own experience, and valuable tools for the journey towards healing, making a huge improvement to their quality of life."

The luncheon guests were eager to hear more and asked about scheduling and costs of the sessions.

There were questions about budget and the operating cost of this ministry which is currently in the area of a frugal $130,000 per year.

At 1:35pm, deacon, the Rev. Steve Bailey led closing prayers and gave the dismissal.

For more information about SOI, how you can support the ministry, view the film or arrange a visit from Father Johnson you can access the SOI information page on the diocesan website at https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/related-groups/pages/street-outreach-initiative, contact them by email at streetoutreachinitiative@gmail.com or phone 604.685.7522. ✠

Fr. Matthew addresses the guests and introduces the film. PHOTO Randy Murray

Listening to Fr. Matthew. PHOTO Randy Murray

LEFT Archbishop Skelton gets to the main thing, the need for financial support. RIGHT Pastor Tom Cooper (seated on right) speaks during the Q&A. PHOTO Randy Murray

AROUND THE DIOCESE

• Holy Calories •

SUBMISSION Maria Hizon

Photos and information about cakes! You've come to the right place.

In the spring of 2019, a unique showcase called *Holy Calories* was presented at St. Paul's Anglican Church.

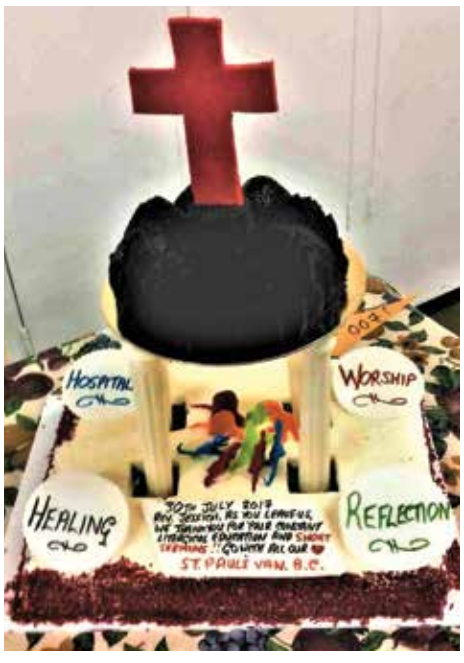
It was a display of cakes from over a span of 30 years made by now retired pastry chef, long-time parishioner, and 2012 recipient of the Order of the Diocese of New Westminster (ODNW) John Wilson.

Back in the early 1980s, John was approached by then rector, retired Archbishop David Crawley as he asked, "So, you are a baker? How about making a patronal cake?"

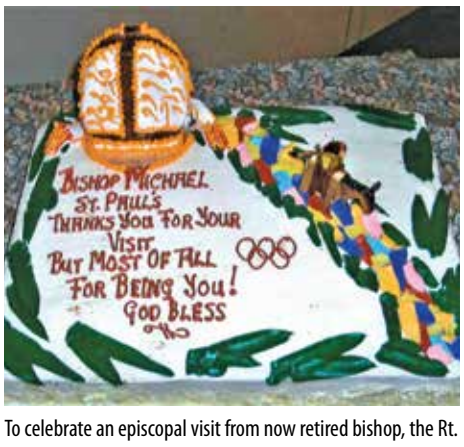
Like a faithful disciple, John answered the call and this tradition, like our faith continued on.

We would like to share some photos of cakes that John prepared for St. Paul's. ✠

John Wilson, ODNW with Archbishop Skelton during her 2015 visitation. PHOTO Submitted



Farewell to the Rev. Jessica Schaap in 2017. PHOTO Submitted



To celebrate an episcopal visit from now retired bishop, the Rt. Rev. Michael Ingham. PHOTO Submitted

• Pet Blessings Around the Diocese for 2019 •

As has been the norm for the past decade or so, a number of Animal Blessings, Pet Blessings and Prayer Services for Creation took place around the diocese of New Westminster beginning on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4 and running through the third week of October.

The first image received came from Richard MacAlpine who sent the photo of Cora being blessed by the Ven. Richard Leggett at Holy Trinity, New Westminster at Sunday worship, October 6.

All Saints', Burnaby's Annual Pet Blessing is growing in attendance. The Saturday, October 5 version again drew a good crowd, with coverage from the local newspaper, *Burnaby Now* and their photographer Lisa King. We commend Lisa's photos to you. They can be viewed on the Burnaby Now website at https://preview.tinyurl.com/yy5uwnfr.

The Rev. Justin Cheng, Vicar of All Saints' also forwarded some photos sent in by the congregation.

St. Stephen's, West Vancouver's parish reporter, Hilary Clark sent in the following:

"The Sanctuary of St. Stephen's, West Vancouver was dominated on October 6 by a large statue of St. Francis of Assisi in celebration of his service to mankind with a marked accent on his appreciation of animals. It was St. Stephen's annual day of the blessing of the animals. Many members of the congregation brought their pets. All dogs were leashed, and all cats were in carrying cases, and were present for the entire service. A more well-behaved group it would be hard to imagine!

The homily given by Canon Jonathan LLoyd was addressed (after apologies to the congregation), to the pets, who gave him their entire attention! He focussed on the love that owners receive back from their pets that reflects the love that they give to them, and the benefit to all pet owners of this love. At the end of the homily, Canon LLoyd blessed each pet and gave them a biscuit. Photos of deceased pets were also included for blessing. As the congregation left for refreshments after the service, the pets were offered more biscuits and access to a large dish of water. A solo bark concluded the event, and all went home happy."

Of course, there were many more Pet Blessings around the diocese this year, and please remember that all are invited to share photos and stories of and from these liturgies with *Topic* and diocesan communications in the fall of 2020. ✠

Cora being blessed at Holy Trinity, New Westminster. PHOTO Richard MacAlpine

Ian waits for a blessing at All Saints', Burnaby. PHOTO Submitted

LEFT Rev. Cheng blesses Ian as Ashley holds him. RIGHT Rev. Cheng blesses Samson, held firmly by Sheila. PHOTOS Submitted

A true beauty smiles for the camera at St. Stephen's, West Vancouver. PHOTO John Ruddick

Pets are blessed by Canon LLoyd at St. Stephen's. PHOTO John Ruddick

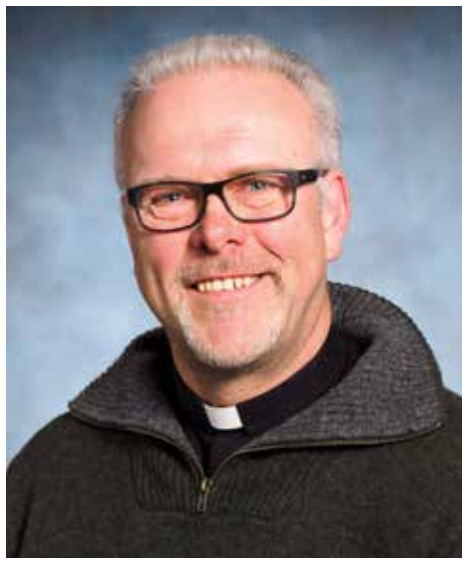
• Clergy & Staff News Around the Diocese •

The Rev. Allen Doerksen was appointed Vicar of St. Thomas, Chilliwack (½ time) effective November 1, 2019, and he will continue as ½ time Vicar at St. Matthew, Abbotsford. The direct appointment was made by Archbishop Skelton at the request of St. Thomas' parish council. A Celebration of New Ministry was held on Tuesday, November 12. The Ven. Al Carson, Archdeacon of Lougheed, was the preacher. More coverage of the Celebration of New Ministry is available on the diocesan website news pages and will be available in an upcoming issue of *Topic*.

The Archbishop appointed the Rev. Miranda Sutherland as Vicar (40%) of Church of the Holy Spirit, Whonnock effective November 1, 2019.

The primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls has requested that the Ven. Douglas Fenton, Executive Archdeacon of the diocese of New Westminster and one of three Clergy Delegates to General Synod from our diocese chair *Faith, Worship and Ministry*. This is one of the six standing committees of General Synod. Archdeacon Fenton has accepted the appointment. *Faith, Worship and Ministry* nurtures the common life and identity of Canadian Anglicans. This work includes the areas of ecumenism, Anglican identity, ethics, interfaith relationships, worship, theological education and ministry.

Archbishop Nicholls has invited Randy Murray, Communications Officer of the diocese of New Westminster to be a member of the new Editorial Board of the *Anglican Journal* and he has accepted. The term of this appointment is three years and will involve a number of remote meetings throughout the year and one annual meeting in person. ✠



The Rev. Allen Doerksen. PHOTO Wayne Chose

The Rev. Miranda Sutherland. PHOTO Randy Murray

AROUND THE DIOCESE

• Team PWRDF Vancouver Fundraises in Ride for Refuge •

SUBMISSION Peter Goodwin, ODNW

On Saturday, October 5, nine riders from six parishes participated in Ride for Refuge for Team PWRDF Vancouver. Participants rode lengths of 10, 25, and 50 kilometres along the roads and dikes of Richmond accompanied by members of 130 other teams supporting various charitable organizations.

Funds raised are being directed to support the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund's (PWRDF) partner organization the Panzi Foundation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Female victims of horrific gender-based violence will be assisted to re-integrate back into their communities along with the hope that women living in the area surrounding Panzi Hospital will be less vulnerable to gender and sexual based violence. PWRDF's goal is to raise $30,000 towards this cause. A current and ongoing focus of PWRDF's ministry is to support the empowerment of women.

Team PWRDF Vancouver was one of six teams that rode in Ride for Refuge for PWRDF across Canada. PWRDF Vancouver's team fundraising goal was $2,000, however, as of this writing on October 8, 2019, the team had raised over $6,000. All participants did a great job fundraising but kudos to Jane Dittrich of Christ Church Cathedral for leading the pack with $1,500 raised with Susan Ohannesian of St. Mary's, Kerrisdale in second spot with $1,180 raised. In addition to Team PWRDF Vancouver the parishes of St. Laurence Coquitlam and St. John the Divine Maple Ridge organized walks to fundraise to support PWRDF in this initiative.

Thank you to all those in the diocese who have offered their most generous support to the team, PWRDF, and some of the world's most needy through Ride for Refuge.

Online donations continued to be made to Team PWRDF Vancouver up until October 31. ✠

Six photos from the day featuring the PWRDF Team Vancouver participants: Chris Ellison, Jane Dittrich, Margaret Marquardt from Christ Church Cathedral; Gwen Ingham, Susan Ohannessian from St. Mary's, Kerrisdale; Team Captain of Team PWRDF and reporter, Peter Goodwin from St. James'; Doug Symons from St. John's, Shaughnessy; Liz MacDonald from All Saints', Ladner; and Laurel Fahrni from St. Faith's. PHOTOS Courtesy of Peter Goodwin and Jane Dittrich

• An Oasis for the Community •

SUBMISSION Jo Walker

On August 1, 2019, St. George's, Maple Ridge opened its doors to all adults 50+ in the community in the form of a Senior's Café called *The Oasis*. *The Oasis* is a social get-together for those seeking to make new friends in a relaxed setting.

Each Thursday from 1 to 3pm, visitors are warmly welcomed and offered a delectable array of baked goodies and Fair Trade refreshments. There is no cost involved to take part in this enjoyable gathering.

Variety is the spice of life, so *The Oasis* planning team vary the activities. Every other week people reminisce about common life experiences while playing board games, charades or card games. By taking time to listen to each other the opportunity is present to develop special bonds of friendship often lacking in today's fast-paced world.

On alternating weeks each month, films, presentations or karaoke are offered. Some examples of the movies shown to date are: *Jane Goodall, A Biography; Chilcotin Ark; Fort St. John (The Fire)—an Artists' perspective;* and *The Clean Bin Project*.

In the summer of 2019, a karaoke session was held in addition to a drama presentation from the St. George's Broadway Kid's Club.

As for presentations, topics have included: *First Aid in the Home, Recycling Tips for the Family* and *Real Estate for Seniors*. There was also a visit from Dan Ruimy, then-Member of Parliament for Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge (Dan Ruimy was defeated in the October 21 election) where he shared information about senior initiatives in the area.

St. George's rector, David Edgerton comments, "In the space of a few short months *The Oasis* has become a favourite feature in St. George's regular schedule. We are passionate about serving our community and being a place where people feel welcome and cared for. *The Oasis* is a place for friendship, fun and refreshment in the middle of the week."

During Advent 2019, *The Oasis* planning team is hoping to have a Christmas party and sing-along to bring in the festive cheer.

Folks gathered at *The Oasis* for a presentation in the narthex/lounge at St. George, Maple Ridge. PHOTO David Edgerton

A warm and delicious welcome from Jo Walker. PHOTO David Edgerton

The Clean Bib Project presentation in the chapel. PHOTO David Edgerton

The vision for *The Oasis* is to build community and bridge loneliness through friendship. Our staff and all the volunteers involved are dedicated to this outcome.

We hope you will consider dropping in if you are in our area for a great cup of Fair Trade coffee or tea and some engaging conversation. If you have an idea that you think may appeal to this age group, we welcome this and will forward it to *The Oasis* planning team for their consideration.

For more information you can visit the website at stgeorgemapleridge.ca or get in touch by phone at 604.463.9622 or email at office@stgeorgemapleridge.ca. ✠

• Christmas at St. Mark, Ocean Park •

SUBMISSION Brian Walks, ODNW

After 20 years, St. Mark's multimedia *Journey of Christmas* is on hiatus this year, but this doesn't mean that the lights will be out as far as celebrating this most wonderful time of the year.

On Sunday, December 8 at 7pm, the Young People's Opera Society (YPOS) of BC and St. Mark's, Ocean Park church choir are co-presenting *A Dickens Christmas* concert which will include dramatic readings of the classic tale *A Christmas Carol*. The passages of the story will be interwoven with traditional Christmas carols. This is a musical and storytelling evening not to be missed.

Funds raised will be split 50/50 between the YPOS and the St. Mark's Syrian Refugee Fund.

Tickets are available at EventBrite.ca at http://www.eventbrite.ca/e-yposbc-a-dickens-christmas-tickets-74708181181. Tickets are $22 General, $18 for seniors and students. Children 5 and under are free.

On the evening of Sunday, December 15, A Blue Christmas service will return to St. Mark's. This is a service for those who feel sadness around Christmas.

On Sunday, December 22 at 7pm, Debra DaVaughn, Chris Simmons and their daughter Cassandra are celebrating Christmas with their annual Christmas concert in the church. This trio has been a highlight for many years at the *Journey of Christmas* with their festive catalogue of Christmas music and some of their other musical favourites as well. This concert will be a fundraiser for the local food bank. Tickets are available at the door.

On December 22, both Sunday morning liturgies will be Services of Lessons and Carols. The Christmas Eve services are at 5pm, 7pm and 11pm. On Christmas morning, we gather for worship at 10am.

Merry Christmas from everyone at St. Mark, Ocean Park (12953-20 Avenue in South Surrey). ✠

Debra DaVaughn, Chris Simmons and their daughter Cassandra. PHOTO Submitted

Topic Christmas Reflections for 2019

On Wednesday, October 9 we sent out an email to approximately 50 people (95% of whom had contributed to *Topic* content in the past 12 months) and asked if they would like to participate in the 2019 Christmas Reflection feature.

The question asked was this:
In 150 words or less, offer a reflection on an experience or an event that occurred since Christmas 2018 that increased your awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Here are the responses we received:

Susanne Stockdill

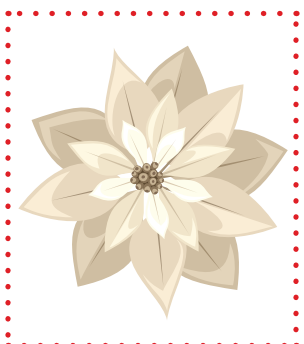
Watching General Synod unfold with the ups and downs, the arguments and agreements, was challenging at times but interspersed through all of it was singing. The beautiful strong voices singing in unison of the love of Jesus Christ and thankfulness to God for all that we have. I was inspired by the strength of faith of all the delegates but especially the young people. I could see the future of our faith community in them. I feel grateful to have been asked to serve and support the work of General Synod but more due to what I was given than what I gave. ✠

Lyndon Grove

The Holy Spirit is the most mysterious of the Trinity. We read what God has spoken, and we have the words of Jesus, but if the Spirit speaks, we hear it as an inner voice.

Illness sometimes seems a mystery, too, as it comes to us out of nowhere. And it is then, perhaps, awake at 3am in the darkness of a hospital ward, that we remember the Holy Spirit is also the comforter. The defender. The strengthener.

And we are aware of, and grateful for, the Spirit's presence. ✠



Sheila Johnston

"Forgiveness is a process." I know that to be true. I've been mulling forgiveness for nine years. Since this time last year, the Holy Spirit has guided me on the last leg of this process, this journey of forgiveness. In 2010, my two siblings and I entered a time of emotional crisis. This was provoked by the discovery that our mother's finances were not as healthy as they should have been. She was in danger of running out of funds. The sibling who was suspected of undermining Mum's financial safety net was incensed by accusations from their two siblings. I was railed at, sometimes in person, often over the phone, but mostly I endured "e-shouting." By using the UPPER CASE option, the avalanche of incoming vehement emails was unnerving, and more than a little heart-breaking. How, I wondered, do I love an irate sibling? How, I asked, do I forgive? The answer was two-fold: give it time and be patient. In 2019, after years of sorrow, my siblings and I found a way back to one another. We were able to move beyond the rancour. We each rejected permanent estrangement as a solution. Truly, God walked with me during the long process of forgiveness. I receive His gift of reconciliation with an open and grateful heart. ✠

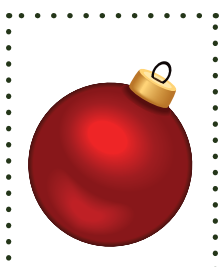
Clare Morgan

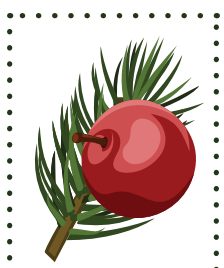
At a Eucharist at St. Jude's Anglican Home, as I elevated the elements and said, "The gifts of God for the people of God," one of the residents, who has dementia and is often confused about where she is, smiled broadly as she saw the bread and wine. In that moment, we were in the exact same place at the same time — the Kingdom of God. ✠

Katherine Yeo

My experience last summer, of worshipping with *diakonoi* from many countries who came to Vancouver, was one of many highlights of an amazing diaconal conference. I listened to Indigenous voices who shared their stories; met the 93-year-old who had taken three planes from North Carolina to get here; and celebrated five years of ecumenical planning. It was encouraging to hear from the many servants of Christ serving quietly and faithfully near and far, guided by the call of the Gospel and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We are a global church. When we gather to hear the story of the birth of Christ, let us remember those across the world who cannot meet freely for worship or education, and pray for peace. ✠





Adela Torchia

By Christmas 2018, a close family member was in crisis after a catastrophic loss in her life. It often seemed likely that we might lose her as well. Instead there was a gradual but grand reversal in which she became healthy and whole again — full of faith, hope and promise! Holy Spirit Lady Wisdom loves to surprise us. It's often precisely when things look darkest that She's at work opening new avenues of light and possibility for us. In recent years I've reflected on how She might be compared with the Aboriginal Trickster spirit. I learned that Tricksters in various cultures tend to disrupt the status quo of ordinary human functioning or expectations in order to open up new possibilities. Creator-God's Holy Spirit can work through some phenomenally convoluted tragedies and detours in life — eventually leading us out the other side to unimagined vistas of hope and renewal! ✠

Pamela McElheran

The morning sun shone between towering cedar branches. Even so, it was a cool, fall morning. Sitting side by side on the back steps of St. Bart's (Gibsons) were two men. The older man was a bit disheveled, his deeply tanned, wrinkled face in need of a shave. "You've had a hard life," I thought. The younger man appeared cleaner, but ill at ease. The cement steps must have been cold. But this felt like a safe place.

"Ok if we smoke here?"

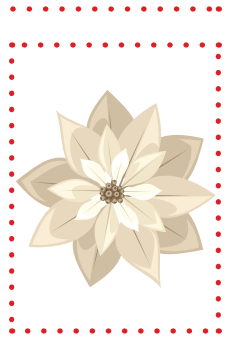
"Of course," I answered as they rolled a joint. After all, it's God's place, not mine. I watched them physically relax and then smile.

"I come to the Food Bank here," the older man said. Yes, God's place. And so, they stayed — bathed in the love of the Babe in Bethlehem.

When the Holy Spirit guides us to carry out God's mission in the world, it is often, as Martin Luther King observed, with "the last, the least and the lost." You are always welcome here; a powerful message. ✠

Rachel Taylor

As a member of the St. Brigid's congregation at Christ Church Cathedral, I am really lucky to feel the Holy Spirit every time we gather for Eucharist. As we sing the offertory hymn, we all trek up into the chancel and form a ring around the piano and our brilliant pianist (Ben Dobyns). We raise our voices in the round, and the song which just a moment ago seemed to disappear into the rafters of the nave is suddenly not only powerful but actively moving among and between us. We start to play with melody and harmony, we share the music more intentionally with each other. Because this leads to the Eucharist, I find such comfort in the mix of voices singing and the snatches of *broken for you, cup of love* or *food for the journey*. As we sing our dismissal, our voices strengthen rather than trail away, and I leave the sanctuary feeling more prepared for a week in a darker and more dangerous world. ✠



Herbert O'Driscoll

The Spirit can be present in a myriad of ways. A February evening, at home a few hours after a facial lesion removed. Suddenly a ruptured blood vessel. Providentially family is five minutes away for a swift drive to Emergency.

A calm receptionist makes the laconic remark that blood often looks worse than it really is. At the same time, he responds quickly. Then a gurney, warm towels, a small room. Pain is intense therefore something is given. A surgeon is found.

Family is present but never is one without someone — nurse, technician, doctor — all offering a promise of help being assembled quickly. An operating room is found, someone presses a hand and gives a kiss. There is a memory of being lifted, a brilliant light and a voice offering "something to make you sleep."

A sense of presence of the Spirit ? Yes, everywhere and in everyone. A sense of being surrounded by the love of family and the quiet sensitivity, competence and professionalism of those in whose hand's life rested. Little fear. Deep trust. Immense gratitude. *Deo Gratias*.

Jessica Schaap

In March 2018, about 25 people from the diocese went to the Loon Lake Retreat Centre, beside the still frozen waters of Loon Lake. We were there for the *Vita Retreat* — a spiritual formation retreat that offers people an introduction to contemplative, creative, and corporate forms of prayer. After each session, we gathered in small groups to talk about our experiences of prayer and life with God. It was like we all sighed with relief to be able to talk about these things. As the weekend went on, the groups' conversations only deepened. At times, serendipitously, we would walk and watch outside. Each day the ice melted more, and the lake waters moved again with the wind.

Stephen Rowe

Over five years ago, a group of Chaldean Christians began attending the Church of the Epiphany, Surrey ('Epiphany'). It started with a few people and grew and grew. Today the Chaldean community (with Christians from Iraq and Syria) make up a significant part of our congregation.

On the Labour Day weekend, we had a wonderful occasion as thirteen children and young people, who had been prepared over the summer, received communion for the first time. Twelve of the thirteen were Chaldean and their families (with many others) have become an integral part of our Church.

The Holy Spirit was in action in bringing the first Chaldeans to 'Epiphany', in inspiring our existing community to welcome newcomers with open arms, and for the Chaldean community as a whole attending 'Epiphany' making their home with us.

We give thanks beyond measure for the Holy Spirit in guiding us all in this adventure. The service on September 1 was a wonderful symbol of how the Spirit works and has increased my awareness of how the church can grow and thrive when we are faithful to our call to hospitality.

Art Turnbull

Gordi was in hospital with a broken leg, since early June. The realization of the inevitable time to downsize was upon me. Our six children, their spouses, assorted grandchildren and great ones were arriving to celebrate our 60th anniversary. The doctor was saying , "Your wife will heal better at home, if it is safe." With all this going on it was time for me to call upon God and trust the outcome to the Holy Spirit. When matters get a little busy as is so often the case in our lives, it is good to have a helping hand from a Higher Power.

Well, that was the first week of July. The end of that week saw an apartment rented, the house sold, the family reunion successful, and Gordi scheduled to come home in a few days. Moving was lined up. In the hustle and bustle of it all, there was time to give thanks to God, through Jesus Christ for the gift the presence of the Holy Spirit.

May that Spirit bless all of us in the busyness of the Christmas season. May we also not get too many ***happenings***, happening together, lest we forget what is important that sustains us.

The Spirit of God came as an angel to shepherds one night, with a message: "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10)

OPINION

Psalm 102:1-11 • Part 1 An Angry God?

STEPHEN BLACK
Christ Church Cathedral

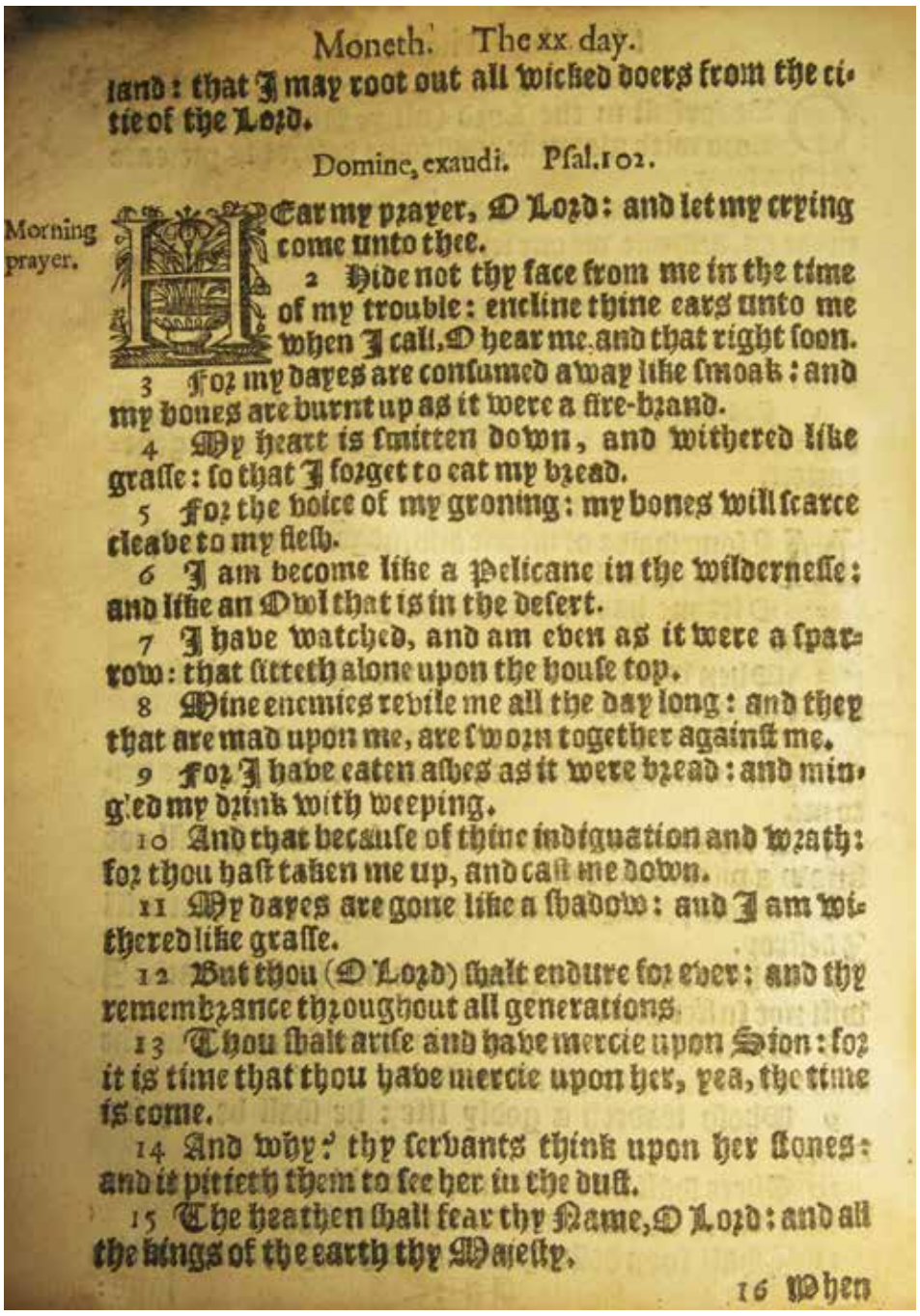
"Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you.
Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call." (Psalm 102:1-2)

The introduction of the Psalm sets the stage for what is to come — the Psalm is a prayer to God. It is a prayer to the one known as YHWH, which is name of covenant. Hence, the psalmist has a basis to hope that God will hear because he is part of the covenant people. Nevertheless, he suggests that expecting God to hear is not something that can be counted on as a matter of course. God, he suggests, is one who can hide his face. There is no explanation provided why God might do this — it is rather simply stated as something that can happen. If God hides [his] face, then all prayer is vain and a waste of time. Hence, it is appropriate that the prayer starts by asking God not to do this.

For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
Because of my loud groaning
my bones cling to my skin.
I am like an owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name
for a curse.
For I eat ashes like bread,
and mingle tears with my drink,
because of your indignation and anger;
for you have lifted me up
and thrown me aside.
My days are like an evening shadow;
I wither away like grass. (Psalm 102:3-11)

It is commonly believed that the Psalms are semi-autobiographical, and that in them we get a glimpse of the inner struggle of some ancient scribes. I have problems with this. It makes the Psalms strangely individualistic — something that corresponds more closely to our sensibilities than to those of the ancient writers. According to this individualistic perspective, the Psalmist in verses 3 through 11 explains his situation. He seems to be experiencing some sort of disease and is being treated badly by his enemies. He has no appetite, has fallen into a state of depression and feels like he is going to die. Every translation I know puts this in the present tense — that is, this is something that the Psalmist is experiencing as he writes.[1]

The person who wrote this Psalm was a scribe — a professional who was employed to produce liturgical texts. His purpose for writing was not self-indulgence. He wasn't laying his soul bare before the people — that wasn't what he was being paid for. Like any good poet, he was drawing upon experiences he had known, but he was not doing so as an exercise in autographical transparency. I suggest his intent was to give expression to what he suspected others were experiencing. He does this using the literary "I" which is not meant to give expression to his own idiosyncratic self. Rather, it was to provide a means for readers to appropriate this text for their own lives. "I" is an invitation for the reader to take this as their own — to meld the subjectivity of the text to their own subjectivity. The Psalmist is trying to give voice to the hardship being experienced by his readers. His manner of expression is just vague and poetic enough for most people to appropriate, at least at certain times in their lives. His readers, then are the ones who know the frustration and hopelessness of bad health and bad relationships.


Moneth. The xx. day.
land: that I may root out all wicked doers from the citie of the Lord.

Domine, exaudi. Psal. 102.

Morning prayer.

HEar my prayer, O Lord: and let my crying come unto thee.
2 Hide not thy face from me in the time of my trouble: encline thine ears unto me when I call, O hear me and that right soon.
3 For my dayes are consumed away like smoak: and my bones are burnt up as it were a fire-brand.
4 My heart is smitten down, and withered like grasse: so that I forget to eat my bread.
5 For the voice of my groning: my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh.
6 I am become like a Pelicane in the wildernesse: and like an Owl that is in the desert.
7 I have watched, and am even as it were a sparrow: that sitteth alone upon the house top.
8 Mine enemies revile me all the day long: and they that are mad upon me, are sworn together against me.
9 For I have eaten ashes as it were bread: and mingled my drink with weeping.
10 And that because of thine indignation and wrath: for thou hast taken me up, and cast me down.
11 My dayes are gone like a shadow: and I am withered like grasse.
12 But thou (O Lord) shalt endure for ever: and thy remembrance throughout all generations.
13 Thou shalt arise and have mercie upon Sion: for it is time that thou have mercie upon her, yea, the time is come.
14 And why? thy servants think upon her stones: and it pitieth them to see her in the dust.
15 The heathen shall fear thy Name, O Lord: and all the kings of the earth thy Majesty.
16 When

IMAGE iStock ID 1176208205 by Lukbar

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible renders verse 11 as: "My days are like an evening shadow." This is okay. The Jewish Publication Society Translation renders it: "My days are like a lengthening shadow." This is a little closer. A wooden translation is: "My days stretch out like a shadow." This is a wonderful metaphor of growing old. Think of your shadow as the sun is setting as it lengthens and becomes less distinct. Then night comes and the shadow is gone. This is a poignant image for death. Again, it is not that the Psalmist himself is growing old — he might have been a young man — but rather that he was writing to give expression to some among the people who were growing old and facing their "nights." It is as beautiful as it is sad.

Why are the people to whom the Psalmist writing suffering? Verse 11 explains; it is because of YHWH's indignation and anger. Why is God angry? While we might want to say it is because somebody has done something wrong, in doing so, we go beyond the text. Indeed, if this were what the Psalmist was thinking, then I think we would be right to expect some sort of confession — and there isn't one! So, if God is angry but not because of wrong-doing — why?

What does it mean that God is angry? What is anger? We all understand anger as it is something most of us encounter daily, both within ourselves and from without from others. It is an emotional response that is typically not volitional. That is to say, I usually don't choose to get angry — rather it emerges as from itself in response to something perceived in another as a violation of some sort. Is this true for God? Is "He" losing control of his emotions? When we speak about God, we use our own experiences to speak about Him — that is, we project upon God a response that would make sense for us. So, when we think of God being angry, we take our own feelings of anger, and imagine them as being God's. But why is God angry in this Psalm?

When we look closer at *Psalm 102*, anger is related to bad fortune more than emotion. In other words, the Psalmist believed God was in control (more or less) of what happened, and to speak of God being angry was simply a way of saying that bad things were happening. There is no indication that the Psalmist is imagining the inner emotional state of mind of God. "Anger" is simply a shorthand for misfortune. It does not refer to an emotional state of being within God.

The line of reasoning is that because God guides everything, when bad things happen, then that is God's doing. In the modern world we have reasons to question whether this premise is correct — does everything that happen emerge in some way from God's will? Again, there are good reasons to think they do not. But if we want to understand what the ancient people who wrote the Bible were thinking, then for a time we can suspend our disbelief, and imagine what it would be like to think in ways differing from how we actually think.

Does God get angry? Anger typically is a way that the Bible speaks of God's reaction to injustice (although perhaps not the case for *Psalm 102*). Again, this does not typically refer to anger in a human sense, but as something very different. I suggest God's anger is entirely not like our anger. If our anger is the only type of anger we really know, and God's anger is completely different to our anger, the meaning of the word "anger" begins to break down when it comes to God. However, we need a way of speaking of God's rejection of injustice, and it might be that saying God is "angry" is as good as we can do, even though it is not precisely accurate.

[1] *In Hebrew most of the verbs are in the perfect tense, which could be taken to refer to the past. Unfortunately, tense in Hebrew is not as clear concerning temporality as tense often is in English.*

All are encouraged to submit letters, articles, reports on parish activities, opinion pieces, photos, and more for consideration as content for Topic

Deadline for *Topic* Submissions

Due to the 50th Anniversary of *Topic* issue in February, the next submissions to *Topic* will be accepted for the March 2020 issue; the deadline is January 17, 2020

Please email Randy Murray at rmurray@vancouver.anglican.ca
All contributions are appreciated • Editor

OPINION

What's Happening With Topic?

RANDY MURRAY
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

I've decided to include this piece in the Opinion section of this issue of *Topic*. It isn't really an op/ed per se, but it does include opinion and some conjecture on my part.

Unless there is a last-minute change (and that is not expected) this will be the final issue of the *Anglican Journal* (AJ) and *Topic* distributed to those who were subscribed through the former system. To receive AJ and the applicable diocesan paper all that was required was to be on a parish list. The circulation department at the Anglican Church of Canada/AJ in Toronto had a remarkable system in place to make annual contact with parish administrators, clergy and lay leaders across Canada sharing updated lists in order that every member of a parish had the opportunity to receive the national and diocesan publication paid for through their contributions to the church.

As with any large organization's operations, particularly communications, this system had some drawbacks as it was difficult to attain and then maintain accurate subscription information. Over time, and now here in the present, a major concern was that papers were printed and mailed out to many recipients who were no longer at that address, no longer attended church or no longer living.

National church leaders with responsibility for General Synod communications and the AJ in particular had many meetings. They surveyed Anglicans across Canada and decided that the best plan moving forward would be to begin a national campaign to have Anglicans intentionally subscribe to the AJ. This would take place over a few months and by September 2019, the AJ would be by subscription only. Processing the thousands of subscriptions proved to be more arduous than anticipated so in the late spring of 2019 the "by subscription only" delivery process was postponed until January 2020.

As of mid-October 2019, there were still 6,000 AJ subscriptions to process. Overall, the numbers are greatly decreased which has been a shock to some but not so much to others. In a piece that I wrote last May, published in the Summer 2019 issue of *Topic* (pages 1 and 4), I reported that there were approximately 800 AJ subscriptions processed up to that point from the diocese of New Westminster. And with the copies that are included in "bundles" sent to various locations (diocesan offices, parishes, ecumenical partners, seminaries, etc.) I predicted the total number to rise to about 1,200 by the end of the summer. I'll admit that educated guessing peppered with intuition is no substitute for data but for the last few years I've thought that probably 1,000 people in our diocese regularly read the *Anglican Journal* and *Topic*.

As of this writing I don't have the final subscriptions numbers from the old system, however I can approximate that the number of December 2019 *Anglican Journals* and *Topics* distributed at 4,700.

Currently the *Anglican Journal* and *Topic* has 1,243 subscribers and with the 42 bundles that increases the total to 1,645 (I assume that some of the 6,000 yet to be processed are from our diocese and that would increase the total).

Coincidentally (or perhaps not so coincidentally), Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) in the diocese of New Westminster's 66 parishes and three worshipping communities is approximately 4,800, so in my humble opinion a print communications vehicle that has been requested by 28% of the constituency is pretty good.

There will be some additional changes to the frequency of *Topic* issues over the next year. The February 2020 issue will be dedicated to *Topic's 50th Anniversary* and there will not be an issue in October 2020. We will be looking at suspending publication of the February and October issues, reducing the annual schedule to eight issues. Subscribers will of course continue to receive ten issues of the AJ.

For those of you receiving the *Anglican Journal* and *Topic* through the mail for the last time, we hope that you will follow the mission and ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada and the diocese of New Westminster through the many electronic communications vehicles administrated by the two organizations: websites; online publications and social network accounts. For those of you who haven't subscribed yet and would like to receive these publications you can still subscribe by following the simple process outlined on the back page of this issue. And for all your support, content contributions, financial contributions and prayers over the years, many, many thanks. It is a privilege to serve.

Many Blessings to you and yours during this Advent/Christmas season and onward to 2020. ✠

This Most Tremendous Tale

HERBERT O'DRISCOLL
Retired Priest of the diocese of Calgary; Former Dean of the diocese of New Westminster & Rector of Christ Church Cathedral

Mid-September 1954 on the south coast of Ireland offered its typical alternating of sun and rain. I remember as I opened the gate to the Rectory grounds how the rain hissed on the gravel leading up to the house. I had just ended my first curacy in Dublin and was bound for Canada in a couple of weeks. I had come to say goodbye to the rector, a good friend and mentor who had played a considerable part in my decision to be ordained.

In that conversation, because he was well aware of my interest in poetry, he produced a small book of poems newly published. The poet's name, John Betjeman, was unfamiliar. My rector wanted to show me one poem in particular. Its title was simply *Christmas*.

I read it and would never forget it. Hardly a December has since gone by without my finding some way of making others aware of it. The particular verse that immediately spoke to me was:

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?

If I am asked to focus even closer on this verse I look at the last two lines with their wonderful linking of something vast — *the maker of the stars and sea* — and something tiny and vulnerable — *a child on earth for me*.

The fact that at the heart of it all there is a child tends to bring out the child in us. This does not diminish in the least the beauty and truth of it all. I think we are wise to take refuge in the simple things of the season — the carols, the cards (and these days the emails) sent and received, the decorations, the wrapping, all of our groping efforts to respond to an immense and beautiful mystery.

> *"What child is this?"*

The fact is that the majesty of it all will elude us to the end of time. The thought occurs to me that John of Patmos had something of the same struggle when he wrote his great preface to his gospel. He too moved from vast panorama — *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God* — to the particularity and the vulnerability of — *He came to his own and His own received him not*. Both poet and evangelist are trying to plumb the depths of the event for its endless levels of meaning.

And there are indeed so very many layers of meaning. To say that Christmas isn't just about giving a gift, or about going home for a few days, or wishing folk well, is not in the least to dismiss such things. Even to say that Christmas opens the road back to childhood memories — sometimes indeed to a lifetime of memories both joyful and sad — is not enough.

The heart of the matter is that we ask a certain question. We ask it as we come to the manger that stands tiny on a table in our home, larger perhaps in our parish church, or unseen but present in our own heart. The question we ask is deceptively simple — *What child is this?* Its simplicity is deceptive because it is massively profound, as we discover when we try to answer it. No wonder there is an instinct in us to reach for simplicity

In those simplest of images Betjeman moves us into different territory. This is no longer just pleasantness or sentiment. An awesome claim is being made. The irony of course is that all those simple carols we love make the same claim. It's just that the immensity of what they are getting us to sing so heartily has been largely filtered out, perhaps by familiarity.

So why is this claim about the identity of this child so important? Because the great contribution of Christian faith to the world is to offer the news that the divine shares human experience and is present in human history.

And why is this important? Because if we are to live within human history hopefully and creatively, in spite of its challenges and terrors, we need the reassurance that God shares that history. To believe this is to know God, not as an infinitely remote concept gazing from beyond time and space on a struggling self threatened species called humanity, but as a power, an influence — see how we have to grope for words — within our human experience; *indeed within all life wherever it is to be found among the innumerable suns and galaxies of God's creation.*

Amazing isn't it, that all of this wonder is hidden inside those two cheery words we call out to each other at a particular time of year… Merry Christmas. ✠

OPINION

Girls Camp. PHOTO Nancy Ferris

Ready for a Hike. PHOTO Nancy Ferris

Junior co-ed campers and counsellors on the chapel steps in summer 2019. PHOTO Skye Walks

Carving pumpkins at the October 4 – 6 Thanksgiving Family Retreat weekend. PHOTO Peggy Trendell-Jensen

Sitting by the pier, October 2019. PHOTO Peggy Trendell-Jensen

Campfire on Visitor's Day, summer 2019. PHOTO Skye Walks

What's an Artaban?

DAVID QUINTON, ODNW
Holy Trinity, Vancouver

Do you know the story of Artaban (the other wise man)? Briefly, it goes something like this: Artaban was one of the visitors from the east, the Magi. He sold everything he owned, his house, his land and all his possessions to buy three jewels, a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl. These three jewels were to be added to the gold, myrrh and frankincense brought by his three more famous friends as his gift to the Christ child. As he journeyed to meet the rest of the Magi he came across a man lying in the road. Unwilling to look the other way, Artaban stayed and tended to the man. Seeing no sign of Artaban at the appointed time and place the three went on without him. On his own Artaban was forced to sell the Sapphire in order to buy supplies to aid him in his search for the King. In Bethlehem, amongst rumours of Jesus' departure to Egypt, Artaban used the second jewel to bribe a Roman officer and save a Hebrew baby from certain death.

Artaban spent the next 30 years trying to find the Messiah, and offer to him the one remaining jewel, the pearl. Arriving in Jerusalem, he was distraught to hear that Jesus was to be executed that very day. His anguish turned to hope as he realized that the pearl might be enough to ransom the King he had sought these many years. While hurrying to save Jesus, Artaban was asked once again for help. As before, he was unable to walk away and instead used the pearl, this time to free a young girl from a life of slavery.

On that fateful day, as the sky blackened, an earthquake loosened a tile from a rooftop, which crashed down and fatally wounded Artaban. As he lay near death, those around him could hear Artaban say, "No my Lord, when did I ever see you in jail and visit you, or feed you or give you something to drink? For 30 years now I have tried to find you, but I have never seen your face." And then a voice could be heard to answer, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me."

A Scriptural story? No. Except for the closing few lines. You will not be able to find this story in the Bible, and yet it pulses through the Old Testament. You can also hear it over and over again in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. From the "Beginning" of Genesis to the "Amen" of Revelation we are called to Love the Lord our God with all that we are and out of that, to love our neighbours as ourselves.

During the summer of 2019, at the place known as Camp Artaban, children, young people and families gathered with volunteer staff members. In community they laughed and cried, they played and prayed and grew in their understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. This is just one of many Artaban stories:

"'*Troll*' was what the young man had said when asked what his name was on that first day of camp. Throughout the early part of the week, it would become clear that Troll did not have a very high opinion of himself. Each day the young man would somehow manage to hurt himself. Early on, the nurse for the week expressed concern that Troll had a great many scars and marks on him. Each day the camp staff would discuss what could be done for this camper, and the community of Artaban rallied around him. Following a mishap when Troll had managed to hurt himself yet again the nurse felt that he required an X-ray. Troll was taken into town by the clergy person in charge of the camp program that particular week. They talked about many things as they headed to the hospital and back to camp. As the week progressed, the community continued to reach out to Troll and slowly things began to change. The crusty exterior began to give away, the injuries stopped and finally this - 'Don't call me Troll anymore my name is Jason.'"

Over the past 96 years, thousands of people have walked up the wharf to the place called Artaban. Many have arrived tired, or afraid, or lonely, or angry. Many have arrived with no idea how deep and how personal the love of God is for them. And many have found Artaban to be an oasis, where, for a short while they have experienced a Christian Community and they have been able to hear and feel the depth of that love for themselves.

Artaban is about reaching out, Artaban is about youth and families. Artaban is about volunteering. Artaban is about Christian community and sharing the Gospel, Artaban is about ministry. If your ministry involves young people we have lots of opportunities for you to get involved as a counselor, crafts, sports, out-tripper or waterfront person. If you enjoy lifting, toting, plumbing, painting, hammering or digging, then maybe an Artaban work party is the place for you. If your gift is sharing the Gospel with young and old, please speak with us about our *theme teams.* If getting away to beautiful Gambier Island isn't your thing we have lots of opportunities for in-town involvement. Committees such as program, rentals, volunteer management, fundraising and others all run during the year and need committed people to help. If your ministry is to offer financial support you could help by sending a donation or by sponsoring someone for a week at camp, the need is always there. If your ministry is one of prayer be assured we are always grateful for that most precious gift.

Camp Artaban is a Related Group of the diocese of New Westminster. Its purpose is "to challenge children, youth, and adults, spiritually, mentally and physically in a camping context; so that they may be brought into a closer relationship with God and each other in a loving community."

Come join us!!

To find out more go online to www.campartaban.com.

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