

# DIOCESAN EPOST

Celebrating the Diocese of Islands and Inlets

A Section of the ANGLICAN JOURNAL

JUNE 2021

## 100th Synod gathers online

BY NAOMI RACZ

On May 29, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee and over 150 clergy, lay and youth delegates from across the diocese gathered on Zoom for a historic synod. Not only was it the diocese's 100th Synod — an occasion that would normally have been marked with a great celebration — but it was also the first synod to be held online.

The synod opened with a land acknowledgement by the bishop and a series of recordings from across the diocese that not only acknowledged the land on which we work, worship and pray, but also gave the members of synod a glimpse into the many beautiful places our members worship from. This was followed by the worship service, with readings and songs impressively performed by a virtual congregational choir, which each “choir” member recorded ahead of time.

One of the hymns sung was “Canticle of the Turning,” and this led into the bishop's charge, which focused on Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, when Jesus and John the Baptist were both in utero. It is during this meeting that Mary says the words now known as the “Magnificat,” which in turn is the basis for the “Canticle of the Turning.” In that canticle, Mary asks, “Could the world be about to turn?” Bishop Anna expanded on this question: “Just as Mary asks this question all those years ago,



*Pictured (from left to right) are Ruth Giles, parishioner at Comox United Church; Sulin Milne, incumbent at St Peter, Comox; and Cathie Talbot, parishioner at Comox United Church. Since early in the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Peter, Comox, has been “Bridging the Gap,” helping families with kitchen staples. Hearing about this initiative, Ruth Giles and Cathie Talbot spearheaded additional support from Comox United Church, with an emphasis on desserts and cookies to supplement basic staples. Anyone requiring assistance can drop by 218 Church St. during office hours (Tue-Thu 9-1) or phone 250-339-2925 or email [admin@stpeterscomox.ca](mailto:admin@stpeterscomox.ca). Deliveries are possible where people are not mobile.*

we too, as the church of these islands and inlets in 2021, must also ask, could the world be about to turn? In what ways is God birthing something new, something salvific, something that is, at once, both joyful and exciting and a bit uncomfortable?

“For we know that the proud aren't usually grateful for being scattered, nor do rulers much like being brought down from their thrones, nor the rich sent empty away. But: if the world is about to

turn, if God's mercy is going to extend from generation to generation, if the hungry are going to be filled with good things, if the humble will be lifted up, then, some of this discomfort is going to happen.”

The bishop then spoke about the “liminal” time we are living in and the notion of a great emergence: “Emergence happens all around . . . it happens. . . in our Anglican church when we open

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# Let's walk together gently into our future



FROM THE BISHOP'S CHAIR

THE RIGHT REVEREND  
ANNA GREENWOOD-LEE

This summer, I am inviting the entire diocese, lay and clergy, to read *Challenging Racist "British Columbia": 150 Years and Counting*. The book was co-produced by the University of Victoria research project *Asian Canadians on Vancouver Island: Race, Indigeneity and the Transpacific*, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (BC office). It contains 80 illustrated pages that can be downloaded at no charge at [www.challengeracistbc.ca](http://www.challengeracistbc.ca).

2021 marks 150 years since British Columbia joined Confederation. This resource highlights how white supremacy and racism have been and continue to be part of our history as a province. If we are to fully live into our baptismal promises to

respect the dignity of every human being, it is incumbent on us as Anglicans in this province to know the history of how that promise has not been kept. One of the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Church of Canada is "to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation." *Dismantling white supremacy and racism is at the heart of this work.*

I know the term "white supremacy" makes some of us uncomfortable. However, I am firm in my resolve that we, as a mostly white institution, must realize that we cannot dismantle racism without being honest about the fact that exceptionalism and its offspring — whiteness and white supremacy — are deeply embedded in our history, institutions and society, and in ourselves.

Did you know, for example, that in 1871, when B.C. joined Confederation, whites made up only about 10,000 of the total population of 50,000? In 1872, the all-white legislature passed a law that Chinese and Indian men could not vote. The legislature wanted to make sure they didn't, as reported in *The Daily British Colonist*, "see an Indian occupying the Speaker's Chair or have a Chinese majority in the House." The

## Bishop's Calendar

### June

- 3 Provincial House of Bishops Meeting (Zoom)
- 6 Preach at St. Peter, Campbell River (Zoom)
- 13 Preach at St. John the Baptist, Duncan (pre-recorded)
- 16 Coffee Hour with St. John the Baptist, Duncan (Zoom)
- 20 Preach at Parish of Central Saanich (pre-recorded)
- 22 Transition Workshop with Holy Trinity, North Saanich (Zoom)
- 24 Diocesan Council Meeting (Zoom)
- 29 Intercultural Development Inventory Program with Clergy (Zoom)

premier, J.F. McCreight, refused to pass this into law, noting that limiting voting based on "nationality, race or colour" was wrong. John A. McDonald overruled him, and the law received royal assent.

Men and women of South Asian and Chinese heritage finally got the vote in 1947.

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## Diocesan Post

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October 25

**All material is subject to editing.**

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### Submissions

News, letters and other articles are welcome. Please limit articles to 500 words and letters to 200 words. Submissions must include name and contact information of the author.

Pictures must be a resolution of 300 DPI and in sharp focus. Clearly and accurately identify the name of all subjects as well as the person who took the picture.

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# 100th Synod gathers online

*Continued from cover*

ourselves to the spirit and when we sit with our discomfort long enough to move into discernment... That is emergence. That is the Spirit's work. That is the work of transformation, and it is only ever birthed out of liminality."

Bishop Anna called on the diocese to put greater focus on race. The bishop spoke about the province of British Columbia and its founding on racist and discriminatory laws that aimed "to make sure that this was, as much as possible, a white province."

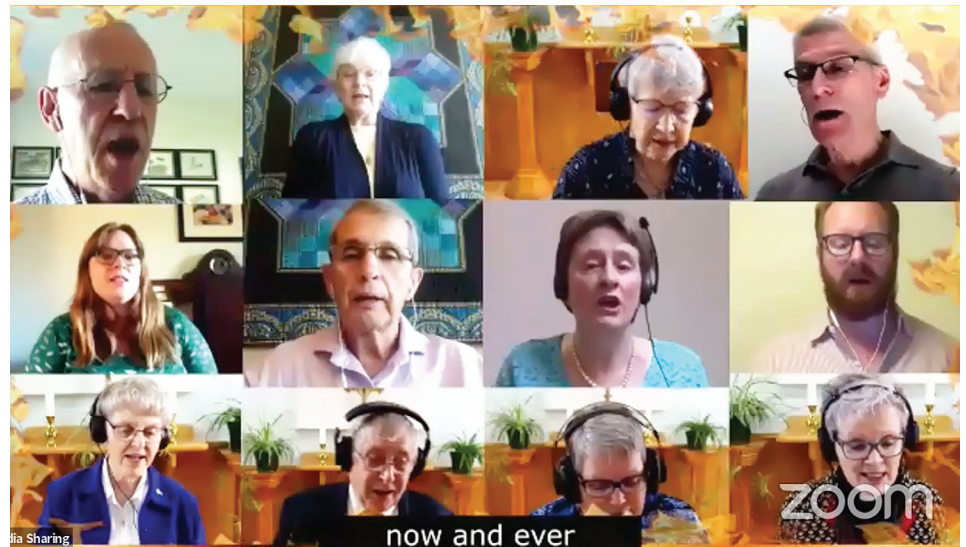
"We have work to do. And the world is about to turn. God is at work in the world bringing the mighty down from their thrones and scattering the proud in their inmost thoughts — and as the privileged, this is going to make some of us feel uncomfortable. But it's time, my friends, it's time."

You can watch the video and download the full text of the bishop's charge on the diocesan website at [www.bc.anglican.ca/news/bishops-charge-to-synod-100](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/news/bishops-charge-to-synod-100).

Ansley Tucker, dean of Christ Church Cathedral, then delivered a recorded tribute to Constance Isherwood, who served as chancellor of the diocese for over 30 years and died earlier this year. In her tribute, Tucker painted a picture of "Connie" as a formidable, talented, and unperturbable lawyer, who continued to practise law up until the day she died. Constance Isherwood was eccentrically old fashioned (she apparently continued to use a typewriter until 2015), but in so many ways, she had immense foresight — for example, in navigating the Anglican Church through controversies such as the ordination of women and equal marriage.

After the tribute, the formal proceedings commenced with a vote on a "No Debate List," which included a number of changes and amendments to canons that were not considered contentious.

Business then turned to a report from Gail Gauthier, finance officer,



*Members of a virtual choir recorded their contributions to the choir ahead of synod, where members of Synod were treated to performances of "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" and "Canticle of the Turning."*

who presented a few key facts and figures from the diocese's finances since the last Synod met in 2018. These included the facts that congregations have received \$859K in wage subsidies and just over \$40K has been granted for training and education, while widows and retired clergy have received just over \$90K. The diocese has also contributed to the revitalization of Indigenous languages, with support for language exchange programs between elders and youth, and on the UVic campus, the chaplain has provided spiritual guidance to over 30 students. On a lighter note, significant parish wine savings during COVID-19 have been offset by additional costs for hand sanitizer and floor markings.

After Gail's presentation, the amendments to the canons and diocesan council regulations regarding the size and frequency of diocesan council and the removal of a designated position of a youth delegate on diocesan council were opened for discussion, and all motions were passed. For a complete list of motions passed by synod, visit the diocesan website [www.bc.anglican.ca/resources/synod](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/resources/synod).

During the synod, elections were held for clergy and lay members of General and Provincial Synod and the following people were elected:

### General Synod

- Annalise Wall (youth)
- Freddie Milne (youth alternate)
- Catherine Pate (lay)
- Ian Alexander (lay)
- Jennifer Sharlow (lay)
- Hayden Blair (lay alternate)
- Sandra Leigh (lay alternate)
- Marks McAvity (lay alternate)
- Clara Plamondon (clergy)
- Elizabeth Northcott (clergy)
- Eric Partridge (clergy)
- Craig Hiebert (clergy alternate)
- Sulin Milne (clergy alternate)
- Alastair Singh-McCollum (clergy alternate)

### Provincial Synod

- Jennifer Sharlow (lay)
- Hayden Blair (lay)
- Gloria Hockley (lay)
- Michael King (lay alternate)
- Clara Plamondon (clergy)
- Craig Hiebert (clergy)
- Lon Towstego (clergy alternate)
- Alastair Singh-McCollum (clergy alternate)

### Diocesan Court

- Kathryn Chan

### Synod Secretaries

- Elaine Ellison (lay)
- Paul Schumacher (clergy)

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# Pride in the church

BY NAOMI RACZ

*Karen Coverett is assistant warden at St. John the Divine, Victoria, and first attended worship at the church during Pride Week 2016. I spoke to Karen about Pride, inclusivity in the Church and Zoom tech support.*

In 2016, Karen Coverett and her friend decided to go on a “church quest.” Karen’s friend was facing pressure from her church to keep her sexual orientation secret. Karen had grown up in the Baptist church tradition and worked as a youth pastor, but she had left the Baptist church and her job a decade earlier. It was after leaving the church that Karen realised she was queer, and not, as the church had led her to feel, “broken.” Going back to a church didn’t seem like an option, but when Karen heard her friend deliberating about coming out, Karen decided to help her friend find a more accepting church. “Church quest” was born.

Shortly after this conversation, Karen was searching for Pride events in Victoria when she came across a Pride Church event at St. John the Divine with Patrick Sibley. Karen attended the event and heard Patrick, a married gay man, talking about why he decided to remain a part of the church and be ordained as a deacon. Karen had heard of St. John the Divine before, particularly in connection with its work on social justice, but the Pride Church event made her realize that St. John might be doing more than simply “talking the talk.”

Karen and her friend decided to check out St. John the Divine as part of their church quest and attended Pride Evensong. Karen was “blown away.” She thought, “Wow, they really mean it.” Despite the deep sense of connection that Karen felt at the Evensong service, she still talked about their church quest as though it was purely for her friend’s benefit. But a few months later, on Christmas Eve, Karen found herself longing to go to a Christmas Eve service. It was 9 p.m. so she didn’t think there was much chance of finding



*The altar in the chapel at St. John the Divine. Image by Karen Coverett.*

a service to go to, but as it happened, St. John the Divine had a service that night at 11 p.m.

Karen attended the Christmas Eve service, where Patrick preached, and she knew then that she had found her home. Karen still felt unsure about the whole “church thing,” but she just kept going back. In 2018, she was confirmed in the Anglican Church, which felt like an important step in affirming that this was her home. She’s now in her third year as associate warden at St. John the Divine and, since the pandemic, she’s also taken on the role of tech person.

When I spoke with Karen, I remarked that it seemed as though realizing she was queer had deepened her faith. She agreed. “Evangelical churches tend to emphasize the spirit over the flesh, ‘the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,’ but it was only by listening to my body, listening to my whole self, that I was able to understand myself.”

“St. John’s is living out its commitment to celebrate all sexualities and gender identities, to truly celebrate and not just pay lip service.” For Karen, this inclusiveness begins with being honest about who you are welcoming in, not

just tolerating someone’s “choice.” Karen admits that church buildings can seem intimidating, and St. John the Divine, with its gothic architecture and forbidding wooden doors, is no exception. On the other hand, she thinks churches don’t necessarily need to be contemporary to be inclusive or welcoming. For Karen, the pipe organs and traditional hymns at St. John the Divine are an important part of the worship service.

Early on in the pandemic, Karen volunteered to help set up virtual worship services. These Zoom gatherings have seen new people joining the church, while those who could no longer physically attend a church were able to worship with others again. As churches start in-person services again, Karen hopes the virtual aspect of worship will continue. “St. John’s is meeting people wherever they are at. We need to meet people not only for who they are, but also where they are in their journey.” That may mean being open to people’s questions, or it may mean offering worship online. Either way, Karen is excited to see new faces, and any lingering doubts about the purpose of “church quest” seem to have long since vanished. ■



## Pride Week at St. John the Divine, Victoria

June 28-July 5 – **Victoria's Pride Week.**

Sunday, June 27 – Sunday, July 4 (noon, daily) - **PrideChurch prayers**, a short service of midday prayer available on the St. John the Divine website, led by LGBTQ2sIIAA+ members of the St. John community.

Tuesday, June 29 (7 p.m.) – **PrideChurch Eucharist** live (TBC) and online.

Thursday, July 1 (7 p.m.) – **Queer Voices: Art, Poetry and Prose** from the LGBTQ+ community.

Sunday, July 4 (10 a.m.) – **Eucharist for Pride Parade Day** (livestreamed).

Sunday, July 4 (5.30 p.m.) – **PrideChurch Evensong** at St. John the Divine in partnership with Christ Church Cathedral.

Ask your parish about Pride Week events in your area.

## Save the date

September 12, 2021  
**Ordination of Deacons** at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria. Hoping for limited-capacity in-person and livestreaming diocesan-wide.

October 23, 2021  
**Order of the Diocese Investiture Service** at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria. Will be held if full capacity is permitted, or else postponed to the spring.

## What is home?

BY ANDREA MCCOY

What is home? Maybe home is the place you were born or the place you live now. Maybe home is where your family is. Or maybe you have not found a home yet. I believe many of us would have different responses. And I believe that despite all the differences, there would be a core truth to every definition: home is where you belong.

Belonging can mean that you are safe, that you are known, that you are needed, that you are wanted. Belonging is never found in isolation but often with community. Belonging is of the human heart and is a desire that all people share, all over our beautiful world.

An Eritrean man once told me that his first life was back in Eritrea. His first birth, his first journey and his first home were all back in the place he was born. “Now,” he said, “this is my second life. Here, in Canada. I have been reborn. This is my home now.” Many refugee newcomers find community, friends and even family in their new place of settlement. Despite all they have left behind, they are looking to a new place, a new start to their life, a new home.

“I didn’t unpack my suitcase for years. I had a new apartment and I enjoyed living in Canada. But I wanted

to be ready. Ready for when the chance came for me to go back home.” She wanted to make the best of her new life in Canada. But ‘home’ for her was not here. Yes, she was safe and she was no longer living in fear. But home was not in Canada. It was where she came from, where she felt she belonged, where her family was, where her heart was.

Fathers have had to tear up their passports. Mothers have had to flee with no family pictures. Families have had to run from something that was so good, so safe . . . so at home. And I think we forget the journey. We climb over the past, what was left behind, and camp in optimism. We assume a new life means a new home. And I fear we expect refugee newcomers to feel at home here.

Another man once told me that in his language, there is no word for refugee. Someone displaced and fleeing their home is called a passenger. My prayer is that all refugee newcomers find their home again. That you and I can find our home. And as we do, may we greet other passengers on their way, delighted that we saw them, honoured to know them and hopeful that in their journey, home will once again be found. ■

*Andrea McCoy is the community engagement coordinator of the Refugee Sponsorship Program.*

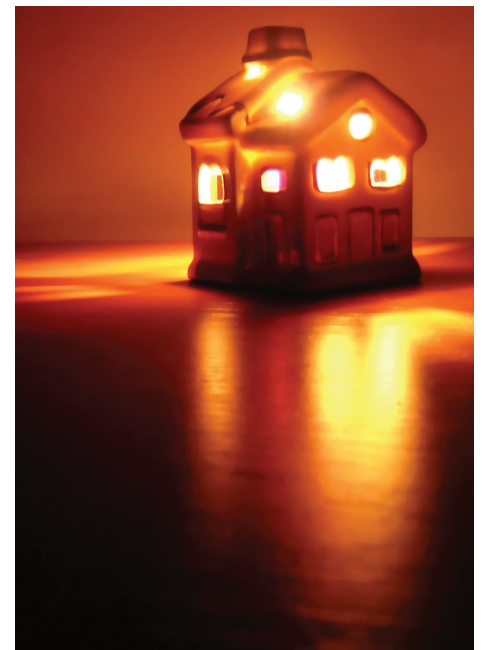


Photo by László Bácsi from Freepress.com

November 6, 2021

**Vocations Day** at Church of the Advent, Colwood. Open invitation to all laity to explore forms of ordained ministry.

May 7, 2022

**Diocesan Confirmations** at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria. Open to anyone wishing to be confirmed or received into the Anglican communion. Speak to your parish priest now to begin your preparation.

September 23-25, 2022

**We Together Diocesan Conference**, location TBD. All are invited to attend!

# The illicit drug overdose crisis in British Columbia and our response as a church

BY LON TOWSTEGO

April 14 marked the fifth anniversary of the declaration of an opioid overdose emergency in B.C. Since the public health emergency was declared in April 2016, there have been 7,024 deaths from illicit drug overdose, and it is now the fourth highest cause of death in the province.

On April 14, Lisa Lapointe, chief coroner; Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer; and Dr. Shannon McDonald, acting chief medical officer at the First Nations Health Authority, held a press conference. They spoke about the important steps that have been taken — such as moves to decriminalize possession of drugs, increase safe drug supplies, and provide recovery programs — but emphasized that more needs to be done. Overdose deaths among Indigenous Peoples in particular are higher than the provincial averages.

“What does this have to do with the Church?” you may ask. As Christians and as Anglicans, we are called to bring the gospel to the town square and to proclaim it. We can offer hope and comfort to grieving families, and we can model what it looks like not to stigmatize people and families touched in various ways by this public health emergency. The time for shaming and blaming families, parents, spouses and the people engaged in illicit drug use is behind us.

I have a personal stake in this: I have a 41-year-old son, Joe, who lives and struggles with a substance abuse disorder. We have worked hard as a family to help him find his way to recovery numerous



*Lon Towstego, incumbent in the parish of Central Saanich, outside his home in Victoria.*

times. I share this with his permission. He currently lives in a shelter in Vancouver after too long on the street. He has lived in Victoria, at times in our home, in tent cities and in other places.

We share our personal story mindful of the many lives lost and thankful that Joe is still with us. It feels like he is dying a slow death. The average age of those dying is 43. I do ask for your prayers. My goal is to bring the conversation into the mainstream. Just as with mental health, which is so strongly associated with substance abuse, the time has come to speak openly about this disorder. It is my experience that between alcoholism and illicit drug use, almost all families are impacted in some way.

Many people think of this as only a downtown Victoria or Vancouver problem. But the folk who congregate in the downtown are from a range of communities and simply end up downtown in the journey through illicit drug use. Please remember each is a daughter, a son, a parent, a friend, a cousin, an auntie or an uncle; and, most importantly, a child of God. We can show the love of God to each of them and to their families.

Since taking our story public when I was invited to speak at the April 14 press conference, I have had many inquiries from families about ways to access support. Lisa Lapointe introduced me to a group called Moms Stop the Harm ([www.momsstoptheharm.com](http://www.momsstoptheharm.com)). This group offers tremendous and much-needed support for families. It has a focus on supporting those who have lost loved ones and those

with family members still struggling. This group was co-founded by Leslie McBain from Pender Island. The group is growing exponentially, and I am an advocate for them. They are working with all levels of government and policing to de-criminalize simple possession of drugs and establish safe access.

The diocese also has a long and close relationship with the Umbrella Society ([www.umbrellasociety.ca](http://www.umbrellasociety.ca)), which offers great support through their recovery houses, family counselling, outreach and support groups.

I encourage you to have conversations in your families, parishes and neighbourhoods about how we can help and how we treat these marginalized neighbours and family members. ■

*Lon Towstego is the incumbent in the parish of Central Saanich.*



*Lon's son, Joe, has lived and struggled with a substance abuse disorder for many years*



# Corpus Christi



## Reflections

BY HERBERT O'DRISCOLL

*Herb O'Driscoll's newest book of memoirs, I Will Arise and Go Now: Reflections on the Meaning of Places and People, was released Feb.17 by Morehouse Publishing.*

### Patrick Street, Cork, 1937

It was my best friend Jim who suggested we go downtown to watch the Corpus Christi procession. As Church of Ireland boys, we were not sure what it was, but it sounded interesting. We were both nine. We told nobody where we were going. As we got near the city centre, we could hear church bells ringing. Soon we were moving within a great crowd. My memory is that it was a happy, boisterous crowd, and this puzzled me. I was used to church occasions being quiet and serious.

Eventually, we found ourselves in the main street of the city, surrounded by a solid mass of people. We knew we could see very little unless we got to the front, so we wormed our way through. We heard the distant sound of an army band, its music slow and solemn. Sunlight glinted on the brass instruments, and the leader marched resplendent in white

gloves, carrying a staff that rose and fell to beat time for the band. Behind the musicians in their green uniforms marched a body of soldiers with rifles. There were other bands, too: pipers with swinging saffron kilts led by a major who hurled his gleaming staff into the air and caught it without missing a step.

Then came the children. Whenever I read of the Children's Crusade in the Middle Ages, I think of this occasion. All the schools were closed, even our Church of Ireland schools, since Corpus Christi was a public holiday. The ruddy Irish faces of Wolf Cubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides were beaming with excitement and self-importance. No effort was made to get them to walk in step. They flowed along in a solid mass, dressed in their uniforms, acknowledging the greetings from the crowd.

Then came the Catholic organizations: the Legion of Mary, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the Solidarity of the Blessed Oliver Plunkett and most dramatically, the Knights of Columbus with their drawn swords and black capes.

The next and climactic part of the procession rounds the curve of the wide street, and it eclipses everything else on this day: the bands, the uniforms, the crowds, the closed shops and schools. First comes the great white and gold canopy waving up and down, carried by priests. Under it, preceded and followed by more clergy, comes the bishop, magnificent in his vestments, blessing everyone to right and left. The thought occurs to me that he might have some way of knowing that two Protestant boys are in the crowd. He looks as if he knows everything. I am relieved when he passes by, leaving us undetected.

Every eye is fixed on what is being borne before the bishop under the white canopy. A disc of gold on a long pole is carried by a

tall, robed figure. In the centre of the golden frame is a small, pale circle: the Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ. The silence of the crowd changes to a strange sound, a kind of whispering wave of awe, as everyone kneels for the passing of the monstrance containing the Sacred Host. As Jim and I kneel, I feel a sense of guilt about my parents not knowing where I am and what I am doing.

My memory fades after that most solemn of moments. Many other groups marched: policemen, nurses, civic organizations, professional guilds. As I think back, I realize I could not have grasped then that I was given a vision of a world made whole: an entire society unified by the primacy of the sacred, giving it absolute precedence over everything else: commerce, schooling, sports. I had a glimpse of Christendom even as it was already beginning to disappear in the greater world beyond the small, newly independent island I called home.

The memory of that day also serves as a future hope for the fragmented culture I now live in. I realize that such a day cannot come again in the same way. However, that image of social unity inspires me to search for signs of wholeness about me, however faint and tenuous. The church that I watched passing by me on that Feast of Corpus Christi was at the time still glorious, confident, even imperial in its capacity to rule, to discipline, even to punish. Many faults are now ascribed to it in a very different age and society, and there is no doubt that they were, indeed, real and grievous faults. But for one glorious hour in those crowded streets, it challenged the so-called real world to dare to believe in a world much more real. Such were the gifts of Corpus Christi to a wide-eyed Protestant boy caught up in the surge of a vast, never to be forgotten, Roman Catholic tide. ■

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## 100th Synod gathers online

*Continued from page 3*

Alastair Singh-McCollum, incumbent at St. John the Divine, Victoria, then read the names of those representatives elected to the diocesan council at the 2021 spring regional gatherings held in April. The full list can be viewed on the diocesan website at [www.bc.anglican.ca/synod-2021/nominations/pages/diocesan-council](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/synod-2021/nominations/pages/diocesan-council).

Following the elections, Synod received an update from Walter Stewart, co-chair of Transforming Futures. At the beginning of 2020, 13 parishes had developed their cases and were getting ready to implement them when the pandemic struck. Nevertheless, two parishes have already been able to raise money and get under way with implementing their Transforming Futures initiatives. While Walter acknowledged that many parishes will not feel comfortable fundraising at this time, given the economic impact of the pandemic, he emphasised that the key work for each parish is developing their vision and discerning what it is God is calling them to do.

Brendon Neilson then introduced a short video featuring interviews with parish representatives from around the diocese about how they have been living the diocesan vision and remaining resilient during the pandemic. Stories shared included worshipping in the woods, marking Remembrance Day and Advent with the wider community, giving out boxes of groceries (see cover image) and a creative children's ministry with puppets.

While Bishop Anna took centre stage during the Zoom meeting, there were over 150 members of Synod listening, discerning and voting during synod. I spoke with some of those people to get their perspective on being a member of Synod.

Timothy Ray serves as a delegate from St. John the Divine, Courtenay, having retired from his position as rector's warden. "This was my first synod so I had no particular expectations. Although the masses of reports and materials on the [diocesan] website that were required reading suggested it might be a bit dry, I was so wrong. The synod just flew by. There was nothing dry or laborious about it. The opening check-ins and acknowledgements from each parish were very moving and set

the tone. It was hard not to imagine God's grace during the opening. The choir on Zoom was sensational. But the highlight for me was Bishop Anna's speech to. She was spellbinding. Her message alerted us all to a fundamental change that is coming. She called it a 'liminal time' but spoke of it in inspiring terms and made it sound exciting and transformational."

Chenda Bishop, rector's warden at St. Mark, Qualicum Beach, who has previously attended four synods over the last 40 years, reflected a similar sentiment: "The Zoom meeting was well crafted and a good use of technology. I did miss the interaction with folks from other parishes and sharing experiences, but I loved the opening greeting from each parish. It was very well done and showed the diverse locations and cultures within our diocese. It left me feeling a greater connectedness than past synods I have attended. I hope future synods might keep some of these inclusive features."

The next regular session of synod will be held in September 2023. ■

*Naomi Racz is the editor of the Diocesan Post.*

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# A life worth living

BY CAROLE GILL

“A Life Worth Living” was the topic for the Women’s Spring Retreat that took place on April 10, 2021. Due to COVID-19, we met via Zoom, with Primate Linda Nicholls as our facilitator and guest speaker.

We were blessed to have Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee, from the diocese of Islands and Inlets, open our meeting with prayer. Bishop Anna graciously also led us in closing prayer.

Our morning topic was “What makes a life worth living?” We were challenged to think about what truly

makes us happy and fills us with joy. Do we find a deep, abiding peace when we go through our day? Do we do things out of obligation because no one else will? In our broken world, we need to do things that makes our hearts sing with joy. Only then will we find peace. We need to model God’s love and share it with others. We find life worth living because we are loved: by God, our parents, our family and our friends!

Our afternoon session was on nurturing. Through discussion, we found that if we display gratitude, everything falls into perspective. We need to be intentional and pray with gratitude. Look to see where God is in your day. Is he near or far? Knowing oneself and being

truthful will help you through the tough times. Start with gratitude and you will find the joy and peace that comes from God. How will you live your life? Will you be challenged to live your life as God intended, not trying to be someone you aren’t?

Come join the next Women’s Retreat in the fall, tentatively scheduled for October 15-17, 2021. Our facilitator will be MJ Lewis-Kirk, incumbent at St. Peter, Quamichan, and our spiritual director will be Colleen Lissemer, a postulant in the diocese of Islands and Inlets. The theme is “Seeking Sophia.” Contact Brenda Dhaene (birish@shaw.ca) for further information.

*Carole Gill is the people’s warden at St. John the Baptist, Duncan. ■*

# A tree and a church

BY TONY REYNOLDS

St. Peter, Comox, and Garry oaks have one thing in common: longevity. A Garry oak can live 300 years. St. Peter celebrates its 130th anniversary this year.

To mark this occasion, Bill Henderson and Karen Cummins, two members of Comox Valley Nature, a not-for-profit society dedicated to conserving these unique trees, planted a Garry oak in the church garden next to the giant stump of an ancient maple. The six-year-old tree was a gift from Mr. Henderson, a retired architect and a member of the parish.

The similarity doesn’t end with longevity. The society’s motto is “to know nature and keep it worth knowing” St. Peter’s is “to know God the Father, as revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ... and to make Him known...”

Pandemic restrictions permitting, on September 12, St. Peter will host a “Home-Coming Celebration” to mark its 130th anniversary. This event is for the hundreds of families throughout the valley whose lives have been touched at some point by this sanctuary in the heart of the town.

The Garry oak was an important part of food production for First Nations

on Vancouver Island. Their root systems nurture a fungal network in humus soils conducive to growing Camas lilies and native rhizomes that were cultivated by the K’òmok First Nation in the ancient Garry oaks meadow lands across the Comox Valley. The Camas lily bulbs, along with the acorns from the Garry oaks, were harvested as a vital food source for thousands of years by the Coast Salish First Nations.

Intentional burning was practised to control invasive species, so Garry

oak forests flourished. But early British settlers did not understand the inter-species relationships, and over time the island lost 90% of its Garry oaks.

Today, and for decades to come, a Garry oak will grow in the garden of St. Peter, a tribute to the resilience of the church and a token of the reconciliation being sought between Indigenous and settler peoples of this island.

*Tony Reynolds is a parishioner at St. Peter, Comox. ■*



*Pictured (from left to right) are Sulin Milne, incumbent at St. Peter, Comox; Karen Cummins, wetlands restoration director at Comox Valley Nature; and Bill Henderson, a member of the parish, who donated the tree.*

# Identifying hope where we find it

BY BRENDON NEILSON

In his small book *The Canada Crisis*, originally published in 1980, Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall wrestles with hopes and despairs that are uniquely ours as Canadians. While I commend the whole of this little book, two concepts have stuck with me since reading it. First, that in order to truly hope, we must become intimately aware of the particular despair that is in our midst (to that I say amen). Second, that one hangover of the imperial Church project of our past is that it is very hard for us to identify hope in places not labelled “Christian.” Hall says it this way: “The task of the Church is not to manufacture the hope but... to recognize its signs and help it come to pass. And that is not a role to which sixteen centuries of Christian exclusiveness has conditioned us!” This is good news, friends.

As of March 2021, the synod office has become the 33rd organization to join Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT). GVAT is a collection of non-profits, religious organizations and labour unions that collectively advocate for the

common good and on behalf of the least of these in our community. GVAT uses the collective power of these organizations to make change for the better.

At each meeting, there is a reminder of the collective covenant: “We commit to making lasting social change and amplifying marginalized voices within our community. We make space to engage meaningfully both where our interests converge and where we disagree. We know that change is not always comfortable; we strive to broaden our perspectives and seek common understanding. As representatives of the members of our organizations or as representatives of a broader piece of GVAT, we acknowledge that institutional biases are always present. Our solemn purpose is to reflect the greater interests of those we represent, be aware of our individual lenses, and contribute to an inclusive space for all community members.”

Attending GVAT meetings over the last couple of months has confirmed our intuition that the voices of our parishes

would be a great fit for this group. The campaigns that GVAT endorses emerge through teams focused on three present crises: mental health and addiction, climate change, and affordable housing. All of these domains have been included in the conversations I have had with parishes about Transforming Futures and about the concerns they have for their communities.

GVAT is a broad community of concern and provides us with the opportunity to identify hope where we find it (even if it is outside of what we would call “church”) and work to help it come to pass. Just as Hall reminds us above, our past makes it very difficult for us to not look for the credit when doing good, but it is vital if we are to become the Church of tomorrow and not just the Church of yesterday.

I would encourage all outreach teams and justice-oriented folks of Haro, Tolmie, and Selkirk regions to be in touch with [bneilson@bc.anglican.ca](mailto:bneilson@bc.anglican.ca) to see if involvement is right for your parish. Our membership allows participation without fees while you discern if GVAT is aligned with your vision. ■

*Brendon Neilson is the vision animator for the Diocese of Islands and Inlets.*

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# No idle hands

BY NAOMI RACZ

The seed for the Chapel Art Gallery at St. Matthias, Victoria, was planted when Nicky Rendell, an artist, nurse and parishioner at St. Matthias, was invited by Meaghan Crosby-Shearer, incumbent, to showcase art works that expressed her personal response to the Syrian crisis. Some of the more powerful images were displayed either side of the high altar, and a special grief and loss service was held. Nicky saw how the community responded and that there was an obvious need for art exhibitions like this one. Nicky then started figuring out how to turn the church's chapel into an art gallery. With the help of a vision grant from the diocese of \$3000, the chapel was transformed into a multifunctional worship space and art gallery, which opened in September 2018.

Since then, Nicky has curated 18 art shows, with 2000 visitors. "We have people who now never miss a show, frequently returning to the same show just to chat and share. Because the Chapel Gallery is a sacred worship space as well as an art gallery, it is a compelling place for people who would never consider walking into a church, to come and experience that 'thin space' between our spiritual and earthly selves."

In May, the Chapel Gallery hosted a special exhibition, "No Idle Hands: Children's Art of 2020-2021 Sheltering at Home." The exhibition was the idea of Kelly Schraecher, a mom of two and art lover, who realized that many families and children have been filling the seemingly endless days of sheltering at home with creativity: drawing rainbows on windows, making handmade pins for healthcare workers, knitting, creating elaborate Halloween costumes and generally crafting and painting their way out of the dark and into the light.

When Kelly suggested the idea of having a children's show at the gallery, Nicky jumped at the idea. "It was the perfect show to round off the Chapel Gallery season. So many parents and children have

struggled with the isolation that COVID-19 restrictions created and as a result turned to the arts for pleasure, stress relief and distraction from the daily bad news."

The "No Idle Hands" exhibition ran for three days and featured a total of 45 young artists aged from 21 months to 16 years. Their artworks included sketches, paintings, plasticine models, dance routines, fairy gardens, costumes and prints. The exhibition hosted 150 children and families while maintaining COVID-19 safety protocols. The weather held and younger visitors used outside art tables to create artworks that were then added to the exhibition. Commenting on the event, Kelly said it was a pleasure to host. "Pretty much every person who entered the gallery left with a smile, all our visitors seemed to thoroughly enjoy a day out and most stayed creating art, adults included." ■



Children and adults alike took advantage of the nice weather to create their own artworks outside the Chapel Gallery.



Inside the "No Idle Hands" Chapel Gallery art exhibition.



Cat figurine by Amaya Crosby-Shearer, age 11.



Paint on cardstock by Mary Humphrey, age 6: "I chose the bright colours because I love bright things."

# A listening, learning church

BY JOHN J. THATAMANIL

Addressing racism has become an urgent matter in the wake of the murder of George Floyd (a year ago on May 25, 2020) and the rise of anti-Asian violence during the pandemic. Now, the latest heart-wrenching discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School reminds us of how much work we have yet to do here in B.C. A variety of secular voices have long laboured to ameliorate historical legacies of racism in North America. They would characterize racism as a blight on our common life. What can the Church add to their robust ethical conviction that “racism is wrong”?

Presumably, the Church wishes to add, “Racism is wrong, and it is contrary to God’s will!” Does adding God to the equation change anything? Or is the Church just jumping on a larger bandwagon? What does the church contribute to race matters that culture at large cannot? We might gather these queries together into one overarching question: is racism a theological matter or “just” a pressing social and ethical problem?

For good and for ill, Christian communities hold convictions shared by secular fellow travellers. In the U.S., the Episcopal Church is said to be the Democratic Party at prayer. White evangelical churches, by contrast, form the core base of the Republican Party. Such alliances raise critical questions: should the Church’s priorities set the Church apart even from the commitments of its secular allies? How so? Does the Church add only an intensifying exclamation mark?

In the United States, there has been theological panic among Southern Baptists. At the very end of 2020,

presidents of six Southern Baptist seminaries released a statement saying “affirmation of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality and any version of Critical Theory is incompatible with the Baptist Faith & Message.” Critical race theorists hold that racism is structural and not merely personal; racism is baked into our institutions and common life and cannot be reduced to a matter of personal intentions.

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*Racism is an assault on the innate dignity and the intrinsic worth of every person created in love by a loving God.*

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Denominations that reject critical race theory believe that secular work on race must not be permitted to influence Christian theological discourse. The Bible alone provides all that Christians need to manage the Church’s approach to race. The Church has little to learn from the world.

That defensive posture is not a good look. After more than a century in which critical secular voices have held Western churches to account on race, gender, sexuality, residential schools and colonialism, any ecclesial posture other than one of repentance, humility and a willingness to learn will strike the world as ecclesial arrogance. It is indeed high time for churches to learn from the world and, on race, that means learning especially from critical race theory.

But does the Church then have anything of its own to offer? Certainly! The Church has a vast treasury of resources on the question of race. Every core doctrine of the Church, including creation, incarnation and eschatology, has implications for how we should think and act on race. For Christians who confess that every human being is a created expression of the *imago dei*, racism is not merely a moral evil but a

spiritual violation. Racism is an assault on the innate dignity and the intrinsic worth of every person created in love by a loving God.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel puts the point forward with prophetic passion and precision. “Faith in God is not simply an *afterlife insurance policy*. *Racial or religious bigotry* must be recognized for what it is: *satanism, blasphemy*.” This profound reverence for the sacredness of human life, affirmed by many of the world’s religious traditions, ought to drive the Church forward in its quest to advance Martin Luther King, Jr.’s beloved community.

The trouble is not a lack of resources; the trouble is that churches have seldom lived into the truth we are called to hallow and herald. That is why the Church needs critical race theory and a host of other secular and interreligious resources: to lead us to repair and renewal. Perhaps it will be the world that drags the Church kicking and screaming into what God has called the Church to be.

Christian communities have a lot to say both about human dignity and the ways that the structural sin of racism demeans that dignity. Analyzing the specific forms that such sin takes will require the theoretical and practical resources of critical race theory, other secular theorists and activists from communities we have violated.

Today the healing winds of the Holy Spirit seem to be at work more powerfully among critical race theorists, BLM activists and Indigenous resisters than within the staid walls of our stately churches. The time has come for us to listen and learn. “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.” ■

*John J. Thatamanil is associate professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He is also intern at St. John the Divine, Victoria.*



# The borrowed tomb

BY BOB QUICKE

I have a strange mental aberration (whether a gift from God or not I will leave to you to decide) in that my mind, upon hearing a phrase or story, will often wander off, trying to speculatively fill in the missing pieces of the tale. It is this quirk that has inspired some of my scripture dramas in which I attempt to put a wider context around often fragmentary biblical narratives.

Throughout the Gospels, we are told that Jesus of Nazareth was frequently dependent on the generosity and hospitality of others. From this I imagine that he lacked material resources. By his own admission, he would invite himself to dine with others (Mt 26:18), was homeless (Mt 8:20), and expected others to provide for his followers (Mt 14:15-17). Even for his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, he chose to sit on a borrowed donkey.

During Holy Week, I had the opportunity to share in the preparation of our congregational YouTube video for “The Stations of the Cross.” As it turned out, I read the passage at the final station from Matthew 27: 57-60 about Joseph, the man from Arimathea, who petitioned Pilate for the body of Jesus and then laid it into his own newly-hewn stone tomb. It makes a fitting conclusion to Good Friday meditations: “Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed.”

The evangelist John provides us with some additional information about what happened once Jesus was declared dead by the Roman guards.

“After these things, Joseph of Arimathea... asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so,

because it was the Jewish day of Preparation [for the Passover], and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there” (John 19:38-42, NRSV).

On reading this passage, many people might think that this also was in keeping with Jesus’ lack of material possessions. Why would Joseph be so willing to give up his own tomb? Was this the act of sacrifice and devotion by a secret admirer in sorrowful reverence? Or was there something else that caused Joseph’s generosity? I wonder what took place as Joseph and Nicodemus journeyed home? Was there more going on that evening than we are told in scripture?

Did Nicodemus and Joseph walk silently along, each so absorbed in their grief and disappointment that conversation was irrelevant? Was Joseph now feeling a deep sense of regret that he had remained in fear and so physically apart from Jesus? That he had forever forfeited his chance to get a deeper, more intimate connection to the Messiah? Was Nicodemus worried now that his act of reverence in burying Jesus would bring social repercussions? Did he still have unanswered questions that now would forever haunt his mind?

Or had they, as we so often do after the death of a loved one, begun to recount their memories of the loved one now departed forever. I prefer to imagine it could have been this way on that sad but satisfying trek.

However, somewhere in the conversation, it is plausible that they might have stumbled onto a poignant but obvious truth.

**Nicodemus:** That was really generous of you to give up your own tomb to bury Jesus. I really admire you for doing that, especially since before now, you were pretty careful about people knowing you were one of his disciples.

**Joseph:** Thanks. You’re right about my going public about being a disciple. I guess I’ll have to be especially careful now, particularly around those on the council.

**Nicodemus:** Yeah, right. The council would be quite put out over you. But have you realized, you just finished cutting that tomb out of the rock, and now you don’t have a tomb of your own.

**Joseph:** It’s no big deal.

**Nicodemus:** No big deal! Aren’t you worried about having to do all that work over again to make another place for yourself?

**Joseph:** Not really, Nic. Don’t you remember what he said in the temple? I’m not worried; he’s only going to need it for the weekend. ■

*Bob Quicke is a member of the parish of Central Saanich and sings with the choir of St. Mary (pre-COVID-19), which is under the direction of his wife, Cathy.*

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## Let’s walk gently into our future

*Continued from page 2*

Japanese men and women in 1949. First Nations people in 1960. Although Black men gained the right to vote with the abolition of slavery in 1834, they could only exercise that right provided they were naturalized subjects and owned taxable property; a practice that excluded poor and working class people and therefore, most Black people.

The history of white supremacy in this province is long and will not quickly or easily be unravelled. But our diocese is committed to walking together towards a future when all people are treated as equals in every aspect of our society, including the church.

This summer, please download and read Challenging Racist “British Columbia” [www.policyalternatives.ca/challengingracistbc](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/challengingracistbc) and join your parish and regional groups this fall to study and discuss this resource. More information will follow and Brendon Neilson, our vision animator will help coordinate our efforts as we strive to live into our vision direction of “Reconciliation and Beyond.”

I look forward to doing this challenging work with you. I know it will be, at times, uncomfortable, but I am confident that God will meet us in our discomfort and that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will transform us as the body of Christ. ■





# Salaam Shalom Peace Vigil

*Pictured (from left to right) are Imam Ismail Mohamed Nur of Masjid al-Iman, Rabbi Harry Brechner of Congregation Emanu-El, and Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee of the Diocese of Islands and Inlets (BC). Photo by Steven Baileys.*



*Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee is seen speaking at the outdoor Salaam Shalom Peace Vigil, held at Centennial Square in Victoria on May 23. In the foreground, Imam Ismail Mohamed Nur (left) and Rabbi Harry Brechner (right) watch. The peace vigil was organized to pray for peace and to call for justice and a lasting end to the fighting in Israel and Palestine. Photo by Steven Baileys.*



*In the name of the one God of all creation, the violence must stop, regardless of where it comes from and to whom it is directed. God has gifted us with everything we need to live in peace. What is happening in Israel and Palestine is not a religious fight, it is a political fight. True religion is love, true religion is peace, true religion is justice. - Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee*

*Fifty people were invited to attend the peace vigil in person while others joined online via a livestream. Rabbi Harry Brechner is seen here talking to attendees. Photo by Steven Baileys.*