

Ministry Report July 2022

Firstly, an apology for not being present at this month's PC meeting, it is my wedding anniversary and having re-arranged my day to accommodate the memorial service, Sabina and I will be marking it together in the evening.

Memorials and Pastoral Care

It's a busy week for memorial services this week, St John's remembers and says farewell to long-time parishioner, supporter, and former Rector's Warden of the Parish, Anne Henderson together on Tuesday 19th July, a service in which John Thatamanil, Stephanie Wood, and I will play a part. Please remember Doug and the family in your prayers.

I have also been asked to cover two other memorial services this week for members of the wider community, a reminder of the importance of our pastoral presence within the neighbourhood and the city.

Stephanie has taken a lead on our Pastoral Care for St John's and has been very active in connecting with Parishioners, particularly those who do not attend in person and are in danger of 'slipping through the cracks.' She, along with the members of the Pastoral Care Team, are doing great work – often 'behind the scenes' in offering care for members of our St John's family. We are always needing more members of the Team who, once trained and who have satisfied Safe Church requirements, are a crucial part in our care for one another. Please contact Stephanie or myself if you would like to know more, or if you have a suggestion for who we might ask to join this ministry.

Worship Update

The reinstated Midweek services have a small but dedicated, and growing, attendance and at present having these as part of the everyday life of our community is valuable and well worth the effort it takes to make them happen. We hope to reinstate the social gathering over coffee (initially) after our 8am Wednesday Eucharist this week, on July 20th - in previous years the sense of community that has grown in that group has been a valuable part of our shared life.

Likewise the Meditation Eucharist on Thursdays at 12.30 is highly valued by both those of us privileged to lead it, and those who participate in it.

Our Sunday 8am BCP Eucharist has a very committed following who appreciate the traditional language and form as complementary to our more progressive preaching and learning together.

Our Sunday 10am continues, as I said last month, to ebb and flow, attendance wise, but a number of folk have expressed their gratitude that we continue to hold it as a 'Hybrid' service – something we plan to continue as a permanent feature. Bishop Anna expressed her enjoyment of our liturgy and music following her visit to us and her joining of the crowd at the Pride parade on 26th June. I am very grateful also to those who have continued to put the work in to make sure that coffee is available (and treats) after some of our Sunday services, as is the case in many things, more volunteers would make it possible

to do this more often, and would lighten the load on those who are working hard to make this happen. As we continue to explore how we may reinstate, safely, something of the shape and look of worship that we had pre-pandemic, we continue to need more offers of people to take roles in the service – readers, intercessors, servers, and Vergers.

Our midweek prayers continue Monday-Friday at noon online, and have a large number of people accessing this resource from around the world, as well as number who attend most days live. We will continue this ministry, and would be glad to have more voices to add to the roster.

Walking Together, Diversity, Racism, and Inclusion.

Al Lehmann and I shared a correspondence some weeks back about what we were doing in building our relationships with the Indigenous Peoples of these lands, wondering if the acknowledgement we have at the beginning of each service is just ‘lip service’. It is a good questions – a number of us have built up good relationships with individuals from the Songhees, Esquimalt, and other nations. We have a chapel space which, under the guidance of Rhoda Brodie-Smith, has been transformed into a beautiful place for worship and gathering, and we have connections with the Leadership Council of the Songhees nation, perhaps a way of seeking to grow our connections and learn from the Indigenous Peoples of this place would be to embark upon a rededication of that chapel space, and an exploration of how the Songhees – who originally grew fruit in the fields where St John’s now stands – might wish to partner with us in making best use of that space.

Al and I will be meeting shortly to have some preliminary discussions, I believe we should be thinking of forming a Walking Together team to explore the next steps in our work of building a new relationship. Do contact me if you might be interested in this work.

Alongside this, we are addressing our own Colonial mindset and structures – and (as we have been charged to do by the Indigenous communities of this place) educating ourselves, as Settlers, descendants of Settlers, and part of a ‘Settler Institution’. I have been trained and helped lead some of the Diocese’s “Intersections” sessions, a Seven Week Course based on materials from Challenging Racist BC, and amended and adapted by the Intersections team with help from the Kaleidoscope Institute, who have been training and educating the Clergy and Staff of the Diocese in Intercultural and Diversity awareness. I commend to you the materials, produced by uVic under the banner ‘Challenging Racist British Columbia’ – both the written and video materials are challenging, enlightening, and well worth studying, you can find them all free here: [Challenging Racist British Columbia \(challengeracistbc.ca\)](http://challengeracistbc.ca). There will also be another season of ‘Intersections’ put on by the Diocese in the Fall – details will be available here: [Intersections | Anglican Diocese of British Columbia](#) (currently that link goes to the last set of sessions, but does give an outline of the program).

Learning Together

Through Pandemic we have continued to offer opportunities to learn together – book studies, discussion groups, and other opportunities. We also have regular meetings such as the Monday (online) Book Study, Wednesday (online) Sermon Circle and Sunday (online) Reflections. The uptake on some of our offerings has been disappointing, particularly when we hear of people asking what educational opportunities we offer, or even grumbling about a lack of them, we do publicise all of these things, and we would be

grateful if PC, and others, would undertake to let friends and fellow parishioners know of all that we are doing.

A while ago now Susan Bansgrove and I had conversations about launching additional learning opportunities – with just the two of us, however, it is unlikely that we could co-ordinate a full programme. If anyone has a desire to help put these kinds of gatherings, online and/or in-person, together, please do get in touch with me.

Sabbatical

Lastly, I can confirm that I am officially going on sabbatical on September 1st and returning December 1st. I will post details of my plans on the blog www.stjohnthedivine.bc.ca/blog in the coming days, and hope I will have opportunity to update the parish on my reflections, the work I am doing, and some of the places I visit throughout the time I am away.

A sabbatical is a time for rest, refreshment, reflection, and an opportunity to spend some time in study and learning. My theme for the Sabbatical is ‘How can Ministerial Formation be Post-Colonial’ – and I hope that I will be able to bring back some learning for both our community and the wider Diocese and Church. Someone very tentatively asked me what my sabbatical is about at Church recently – please do feel free to ask questions about what I am hoping to do and where I am hoping to go for study, none of it is secret!

As always, with thanks for our partnership in the Gospel,

Alastair