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Twenty Years of Faithfulness & Dedication

RANDY MURRAY

Communications Officer & Topic Editor

The Rev. Charles Balfour.



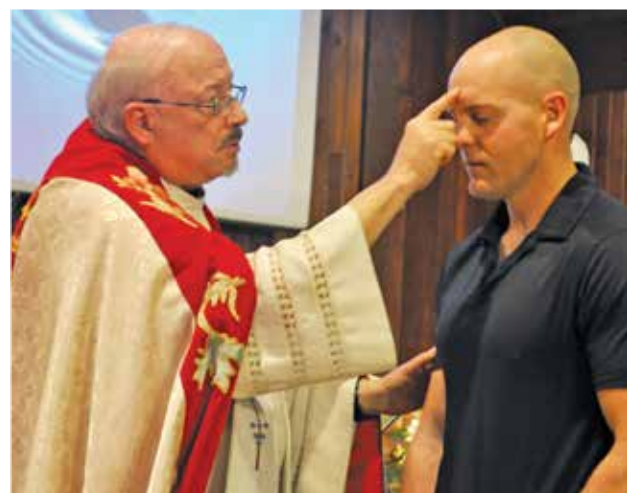
To be rector of a parish for over 20 years is truly a remarkable achievement in ministry. To be the ordained leader of a shared ministry for that length of time offers a unique opportunity and a unique perspective. The Rev. Charles Balfour, now the retired rector of St. John the Divine, Maple Ridge, and retired regional dean of the deanery of Golden Ears has experienced this opportunity in ministry.

It is rare these days for an incumbent to remain in any parish (but particularly in a small parish) for more than 20 years. A lengthy incumbency implies consistency, but for Charles that consistency has always been within the context of transition, for he has seen the community change, develop, shift, increase and contract. He has baptized new believers and the newly born, and been in their lives to see them grow to maturity in mind, body and spirit. He has been there for the St. John's faith community as their pastor to see them through good times and bad, happy times and sad.

Sunday, December 27, 2015, was the last liturgy that Charles would preside over as rector of the parish and it was a fitting farewell. Within the larger structure of *A Festival of 9 Lessons and Carols for Christmas*, a baptism and the Eucharist were celebrated. This was a perfect combination for Charles who is a musician, an evangelical at heart and an Anglican priest who understands that the Eucharist is at the heart of our denomination's worship tradition.

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LEFT After baptizing Brandon with Holy Water, Charles marks him with the sign of the cross. MIDDLE Charles presents the newly baptized and encourages the congregation to welcome him. RIGHT The last Eucharistic Prayer of his incumbency.



Bishop's Fund for Refugee Resettlement

On Monday, December 21, 2015, Bishop Melissa Skelton wrote a letter that was circulated electronically around the diocese of New Westminster and beyond. Here is an excerpt from that letter:

"...I am excited to announce the creation of *The Bishop's Fund for Refugee Resettlement*. I am initiating this fund in response to the outpouring of interest in our diocese in assisting refugees (there are 14 projects currently underway), and from my own conviction that becoming more involved in this important effort in Canada is a powerful expression of who we are as Anglican Christians.

The purpose of this fund is to cover a range of expenses above and beyond the monies raised by parishes or other groups to satisfy the requirements of their sponsorship applications. Examples of the kinds of expenses the Bishop's Fund for Refugee Resettlement

could cover include: the repayment of travel loans, extraordinary medical expenses, "month 13" expenses (expenses during the time of transition from sponsor support to self-sufficiency), and any other unforeseen gaps between a refugee family's projected expenses and what it actually costs to live in this part of Canada.

I would ask that you share the news about this fund by forwarding this information to friends, relatives, co-workers and social network contacts. I also encourage all the parishes of the diocese to link to this article from your parish websites and social media accounts. Let's see if we can encourage many, many people to contribute."

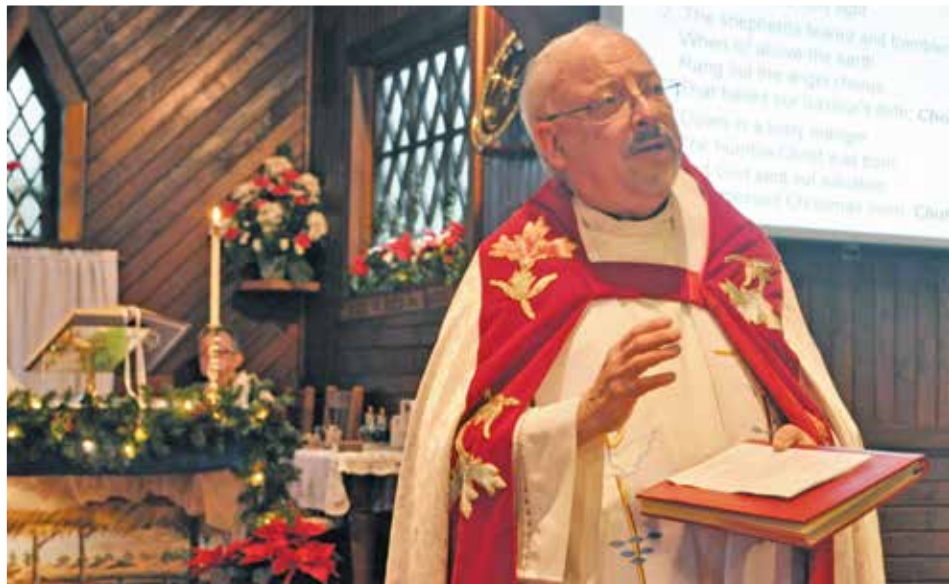
Just prior to this issue of *Topic* going to print in early January, the diocese of New Westminster finance department announced that there was more than \$50,000 in the fund.

How to Give

Those wishing to contribute by credit card will find a "Give" button located at the top of each page of the diocesan website, www.vancouver.anglican.ca and here is the direct link to that page <https://pushpay.com/pay/vancouveranglican/xSz4gw4pMalkWmPiQYB-8A>. You can also text DONW to 7797, and this same contribution link will be texted to you. Please click on the dropdown box beside the words "Giving Type."

Those wishing to make a contribution by cheque, may make out the cheque to *The Diocese of New Westminster*, noting that it is for the *Bishop's Fund for Refugee Resettlement* and mail it to: 1410 Nanton Avenue, Vancouver BC, V6H 2E2. ☛

Charles finishes the Ninth Reading and begins a brief homily.



Posing for photos after the service.



Twenty Years of Faithfulness & Dedication

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Prior to the procession, Charles stood at the chancel entrance and offered a brief overview of the liturgy that was to follow. He said that it was wonderful to have people return to the church that morning who were members of the parish when he began.

Following the procession and the singing of *O Come All Ye Faithful*, the Service of Holy Baptism began and Brandon was baptized and welcomed into the Body of Christ. The baptism was followed by the Service of Lessons and Carols, which concluded with the rector reading the Ninth Lesson, *John 1: 1–14*. Following the reading, Charles somewhat apologetically looked out over his community and informed them that he was going to speak with them for a few minutes and “that they weren’t going to get rid of him that easily.”

He began by saying that “it’s been a real pleasure... and a privilege to baptize Brandon on the last Sunday (of his incumbency).” He paused, looked out over the congregation, looked at Brandon and his family and said, “This is what it’s all about.”

Charles continued on to preach an extemporaneous sermon, brief and heartfelt. “St. John is the Apostle of love... we need more love.” He urged his community not to expect perfection from each other, not to expect that they will always agree, but to love each other and spread that love beyond the walls of St. John the Divine, Maple Ridge.

The church building, the oldest in the diocese at 156 years now situated in its current location since 1983, is in a perfect place beside the Maple Ridge Hospital to continue to offer a “special sense of God,” a place for prayer and reflection and a home for “a relevant ministry” of pastoral care. He reminded those present of the charity founded to support the ministry of the diocese’s oldest church, *The Friends of St. John*.

He admitted that as a Wycliffe Seminary graduate he is a bit of an evangelical and his tone of voice became emotional as he asked the question “How bad does it have to get before people realize they need God in their lives and a saviour, a saviour in the person of Jesus Christ? Don’t be afraid to be proud of your faith... be proud of your Christian citizenship.”

After the homily, Charles celebrated the Eucharist for the final time as rector, and when the Prayer after Communion had been spoken, parish administrator, Gail Lefèvre came up to the chancel entrance and read the following letter dated December 21, 2015 from Bishop Skelton offering her congratulations, support and prayers to Charles and

the faith community of St. John the Divine for the years of shared ministry together.

Dear Charles and the People of St. John the Divine:

I wanted to send my greetings to you all as you celebrate Charles’s time at St. John the Divine and to wish you all my best as Charles retires and as St. John’s enters an interim time.

Charles, you have been a gift to St. John’s in your faithfulness and your dedication to the parish and its people. I know you will be deeply missed by all! People of St. John’s, I know that you will need time to adjust to life without Charles, and so I will be praying for you as you wish Charles the best in this next phase of his life.

I have very much enjoyed the time I have had with both you, Charles, and the people of St. John’s. Please know that I will be thinking of you all on the 27th.

In Christ
+Melissa

Gail Lefèvre reads the letter from Bishop Skelton.



Prior to the Blessing, Charles affirmed for the congregation that there will be a time of interim ministry at St. John’s as it is assumed it “may take more than five minutes” to get over him and he then introduced the Rev. Fr. Paul Illical, long time rector of St. Michael’s, Surrey, now retired but very active in interim and Sunday supply ministry. Father Paul was present at the worship and was the Sunday supply priest for January 2016. Charles also urged the congregation to continue to support the ministry of St. John’s deacon, the Rev. Maggie Cole who will continue in her ministry.

Please keep Charles and the people of St. John the Divine, Maple Ridge in your thoughts and prayers as they move forward in their journeys of faith and ministry. ✠

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The Rt. Rev. Melissa M. Skelton

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Thank you!

Birthing the Julian of Norwich Ministry in Spiritual Companionship at St. Paul's Anglican Church

FERNANDO ESTE
People's Warden, St. Paul's

TOM ESAKIN
Spiritual Director, St. Paul's.

A Christian might ask, "where is a loving God in this difficult situation?" Agnostics or atheists might enquire: "What is life's meaning?" "Aye, there's the rub," wrote Shakespeare. Profound conversations about life's sacred questions are as old as the human condition. They are also at the root of the practice and ministry of spiritual companionship/direction. In our Christian tradition, we understand these yearning questions to lead to and eventually fully rest in the Divine, as reflected in our Triune God. Spiritual companionship is a Christian formation practice that intentionally unites souls in *God conversations* toward understanding how the Divine is moving in our individual lives, even within those places where God's presence may not be immediately evident to us. This past November, St. Paul's Church launched its new *Julian of Norwich Ministry in Spiritual Companionship* in support of such sacred conversations.

As Christians, we are increasingly surrounded by people (whether friends, family, coworkers) who, while now less-likely to be church-goers in what scholars frequently refer to as our "post-Christendom" world, do engage in searching conversations about life and its meaning. In BC, these types of conversations often include voiced-sentiments such as: "I am spiritual but not religious" or "my religion is compassion" or "I live in the moment" or "I believe in a God but not church." At every moment, God is speaking to our world in new ways. Modern approaches to voicing ancient human sentiments around seeking and meaning offer the Church with opportunities to discern God's will for today's people. St. Paul's discerned that a new ministry of spiritual companionship, offered to parishioners and the broader community, is an authentic—and importantly, *adaptable*—Christian response to minister to humanity's ancient seeking, yet in a *modernly-relevant* way.

Spiritual direction in Christianity is rooted in Christ's personal example and words which guided his disciples and followers on how to live a more deeply authentic life in the love of God. The Desert Fathers and Mothers of Egypt, from the 3rd to 5th century CE, served as early-prototype Christian spiritual directors through their responses to a seeker's request for an Abba or Amma—"Give me a word" (these desert monastics were also the influencers for later Christian monastic communities). While throughout Church history priests and monastic communities would certainly offer spiritual guidance to their flock, St. Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises made Jesuits the spiritual direction "specialists" in the Christian world. In Canada, the ecumenical expansion of spiritual direction has direct roots to both the Anglican Church and specifically St. Paul's, as the Rev. Dr. Don Grayston—a former Honorary Priest at St. Paul's—founded Canada's first and now national ecumenical program in spiritual formation and direction, the Jubilee Associates (www.jubileeassociates.ca).

The birthing process of this new ministry at St. Paul's reveals God's wonderfully mysterious ways. It all began after

Tom Esakin (left), the Rev. Jessica Schaap (middle, holding an Ikon of Julian of Norwich) and Fernando Este (right). PHOTO Tom Esakin



St. Paul's parishioner, Fernando Este, became an "accidental" spiritual companion to a dozen individuals, the majority of whom identify as agnostic or atheist and say they grew through hearing Fernando's personal story of spiritual and psychological healing and rebirth in Christ. Fernando soon realized that self-knowledge can open doors to a person exploring God-like questions, so with the approval of the St. Paul's leadership team he developed a spiritual workshop entitled *Spiritual or Religious*, which he conducted in 2015, for St. Paul's parishioners. Later, when elected People's Warden of the parish, he shared with the leadership team details of his own unexpected call to spiritual direction and his sense that the Holy Spirit was guiding St. Paul's in some way toward spiritual companionship. Next comes what Fernando refers to as "the miracle": the Rev. Jessica Schaap, St. Paul's rector, called him to share that Thomas Esakin, an interfaith spiritual director trained through the Jubilee Associates and a member of Spiritual Directors International (www.sdiworld.org), had moved back to Vancouver, returned as a parishioner of St. Paul's, and was offering his spiritual companionship supports to the church. Voila! God's movements were seen before our very eyes.

After months of planning and preparation, including establishing our new ministry charter, on November 1, 2015, St. Paul's launched its new *Julian of Norwich Ministry of Spiritual Companionship*, which experienced a level of interest beyond early expectations. For those unfamiliar with her, Julian of Norwich, our patron saint for this ministry, was a 14th century Christian mystic whose writings and spiritual direction offered many a deep, wise, and helpful path for seeking God. Companions to our Anglican-rooted interfaith ministry covenant (commit) to meet once per month for a 50 minute session over a 12 month period, meeting in our new Julian of Norwich Office at the parish that has been re-designed for comfort and adherence to policies around parishioner safety. Our parish is now in the process of developing a growth plan for the ministry, as we aim to fully offer it within the geographical area of the parish and the diocese of New Westminster, and also via Skype.

If your parish has interest in offering its parishioners formalised spiritual companionship sessions on one day per month, St. Paul's welcomes your enquiries through their website at www.stpaulsanglican.bc.ca, by phone at 604.928.6078 or by email at thomas@reflectivementoring.com. We offer to support your parish in its own Christian formation efforts by bringing our spiritual companionship ministry to your church and its parishioners. St. Paul's welcomes joining alongside you in assisting God in establishing the Kingdom in our midst. ✠



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The St. Paul's Julian of Norwich
Ministry in Spiritual Companionship...

...is newly offered by and in support of St. Paul's Anglican Church West End, in partnership with Reflective Presence. Julian of Norwich, our patron saint for this ministry, was a 14th century Christian mystic whose writings and spiritual direction offered many a deep, wise, and helpful path for seeking God. This ministry is offered either in-person or via Skype. Tom Esakin is our Anglican-rooted interfaith Spiritual Director.



THE LITTLE RED CHURCH ON JERVIS

For more information about spiritual companionship, please visit:
www.stpaulsanglican.bc.ca or contact Tom at either: 604.928.6078
or via e-mail at: thomas@reflectivementoring.com

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

compiled by Anglican Archivist Melanie Delva

10 years • 2006 Topic announces and introduces new Archivist, Melanie Delva, to the diocese.

25 years • 1991 Jen Vanier, founder of L'Arche, visits the diocese.

30 years • 1986 Vancouver parishes get involved in helping to celebrate the 100th birthday of the City of Vancouver.

Doreen Stephens named new Diocesan Archivist.

50 years • 1966 A night school course on the *God is Dead* movement draws unprecedented crowds.

We Couldn't Do This Without You

The Luncheon for Retired Clergy & Spouses, December 3, 2015

RANDY MURRAY
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

The Reverend's Doug Dittrich and Ed Schmitt converse, the Ven. Ronald Harrison is on the right. PHOTO Randy Murray



LEFT Bishop Skelton with the Rev. Helen Hill at the pre-lunch reception. RIGHT Luncheon Organizer, Dorothy Mash, Order of the Diocese of New Westminster (ODNW) welcomes the group. PHOTOS Randy Murray



The Rev. John Mash has just rung the bell for lunch. PHOTO Randy Murray



“We couldn’t do this without you.” Those were the words spoken by the Rt. Rev. Melissa Skelton, the 9th Bishop of the diocese of New Westminster as she concluded her remarks to the 86 retired clergy and spouses gathered in the Trendell Lounge, Thursday, December 3, 2015.

The attendance at, and popularity of, this event seems to be increasing and that is largely due to the hard work of planning and promotion done by the team of Dorothy and the Rev. John Mash, diocesan chaplains to retired clergy and spouses. Assisted by members of the Synod staff, specifically, Administrative Assistant to the Bishop’s and Executive Archdeacon’s Office, Bill Siksay and Receptionist/Administrative Assistant, Phil Colvin, Dorothy with John organize the invitations, the venue, the catering and the programme.

The 2015 version was held in the Trendell Lounge, the gathering space shared by the Synod office and the Parish of St. John’s, Shaughnessy. Prior to the plenary finding seats at tables for the lunch, the group gathered in the reception area of the Synod offices at 1410 Nanton Avenue for a glass of wine or fruit juice and enthusiastic conversation. After half an hour or so, the Rev. John Mash approached the bell on the reception desk and rang it a couple of times to announce that it was time to go in for lunch.

The steam trays containing the food were all in place and once everyone had more or less found a seat and made themselves comfortable, Dorothy addressed the group, welcoming everyone to the event. She pointed out the three new retirees present, and attending the lunch for the first time, the Reverend’s Gail Newell, David MacKenzie and Helen Tervo (with her spouse Joe). She thanked the aforementioned Bill Siksay and Phil Colvin for all their help and informed the group that Archivist Melanie Delva also present at the lunch that day is scheduled to speak about the history of the diocese at the group’s next event, which is the spring luncheon in 2016. Then she read a list of regrets from those who were unable to attend. After the regrets were read, Dorothy introduced the Executive Archdeacon of the diocese, the Ven. Douglas Fenton who had returned to his ministry earlier that week following an extended study leave. Archdeacon Fenton asked the Synod staff personnel present at the lunch to stand while he made the introductions, and then said Grace.

For the past dozen years the Annual Retired Clergy and Spouses luncheons have been catered by Banqueting Table Catering, a business that gives workplace opportunities to women who are single mothers, have recently experienced a change in circumstances and have re-entered the work force. The Banqueting Table folks prepared a delicious meal of: baked ham with a choice of fruit or mustard sauces, petit roast potatoes, a hot winter vegetable medley, spring greens with shaved almonds in a strawberry vinaigrette, Parker House style rolls (they were really good) and a holiday assortment of squares and cookies to compliment the hot beverages served after the main course.

After the tea, coffee, cookies and squares were served, Dorothy introduced Bishop Skelton. In her introduction Dorothy made reference to the amount of travel around the diocese and the number of episcopal visitations Bishop Skelton has made in the 20 months of her episcopacy. She made the following observation in reference to the bishop and her availability and commitment, “she (Bishop Skelton) has taken the time to be a listener, listening to our stories as she becomes a part of the story.”

The bishop began her address by saying that she had been looking forward to this event all year and looking forward to the... ham! She offered a bit of a disclaimer about the still sparse design of the space at 1410 Nanton Avenue and assured the retired clergy and spouses that there are plans to install cabinets and shelves that will serve to display some of the history of the diocese and those displays will chronicle the dioceses’ “great courage” and the dioceses’ “great mistakes.” She then told the group that she would spend a few minutes updating them on what is happening around the diocese and then open the floor to questions. The important issues that she referred to were:

- The thirteen refugee projects currently in process connected to the diocese as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) and the one project involving a diocesan parish working with another SAH. Her desire is to develop some support in the form of fundraising and action to help settle those refugees.
- The complete “re-tooling” of the process of discernment for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

LEFT The Ven. G. Douglas Fenton, Executive Archdeacon of the diocese and Archdeacon of Burrard asks the members of Synod Staff present to stand. RIGHT The gathering in the Trendell Lounge prior to Grace. PHOTOS Randy Murray



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Holy Orders (priests and deacons) from the recent practice of screening seekers to actively recruiting those who have been identified as having a vocation. At the November 7, Vocations Day more than forty attended, among the forty, fifteen were seeking ordination to the priesthood and ten seeking ordination to the diaconate. She pointed out that the priests at the parish level would be a key part of the process.

- A review of the diaconate in the diocese. What needs to be maintained, renewed or changed? The bishop is working closely with Archdeacons for Deacons, the Ven. Bruce Morris and Director for Diaconal Formation, the Rev. Dr. Ellen Clark-King. The bishop indicated that a handbook for deacons is in a draft stage and that she is still focused on the goal of having a deacon in each parish.
- The first cohort of the Membership Growth Practitioners Group consisting of twenty-seven priests and one lay person (who shares responsibility with an ordained priest for a faith community) have been meeting once a month for a full day in 2015 to work on membership growth in their parishes. The members of the group have gathered together to work on community building skills and have worked to sharpen each other's skills in areas such as homiletics. The program designed by Synod staffer Tasha Carrothers and Bishop Skelton will not be offered next year but is considered a success by all involved, and will likely be renewed for 2017.
- The Diocesan School for Parish Development is now fully subscribed and continues to gain interest from other constituencies around the Anglican Communion in North America. This year, the very large Episcopal Diocese of Chicago will be offering the curriculum (Bishop Skelton will be in Chicago for the launch), and General Synod is looking at partnering with the diocese of New Westminster to launch the program Canada-wide.

The Buffet. PHOTO Randy Murray



TOP & BOTTOM Table conversations. PHOTOS Randy Murray



LEFT The Bishop's address. RIGHT Dorothy with the wicker donation basket signals the end of the luncheon. PHOTOS Randy Murray



Then her address took on a more personal tone. She reflected on her practice of writing notes on a card to the clergy of the diocese on the occasion of their ordination anniversary. She usually does that early in the morning and the calmness of the start of another busy day gives her the opportunity to think about the person she is addressing in the message that she writes in the card. And then she thanked the retired clergy for their continued connections to the diocese, she thanked them for being "a prayerful presence in the parishes you attend" and finished by saying "we couldn't do this without you."

The final phase of the bishop's address was the Q&A where she was asked a couple of questions about the transition from her life in ministry in the United States to her life in ministry in Canada. She said that she is always excited when she approaches the border from the south, going north. She said that her general analysis is that "Canada compared to the US is less about doing and more about being." She then shared that she is seriously looking into becoming a Canadian citizen which was met with big smiles and affirming nods.

The event closed with Dorothy thanking everyone for attending and placing a colourful wicker basket on a table near the exit in order to receive free-will offerings to be directed to the Banqueting Table Catering staff.

Everyone in attendance was then encouraged to go on a guided tour of the Synod offices and diocesan archives which brought to an end another successful Retired Clergy and Spouses event. ✦



Wisdom Workshop with Matthew Wright at St. Hilda's by the Sea

SHER SACKS

St. Hilda-By-the-Sea, Sechart

On November 23 and 24, 2015, Matthew Wright, an Episcopal priest from St. Gregory's church in Woodstock, New York (yes *that* Woodstock) presented a group of about two dozen with a remarkable range of material about the Wisdom teachings of *Yeshua* (the Hebrew name of Jesus). We have long been taught what we are to believe about Yeshua but far less about how the teachings of Yeshua can transform our lives. And Matthew offered this option.

The workshop was not about knowing more, but about *knowing more deeply*. We are often told to "get out of our heads and into our hearts" which is problematic given the nature of the English language which equates heart with emotion. As Matthew pointed out, the heart is not the emotional centre; it is rather the organ of spiritual perception. It would be more accurate to say, "Get into your *HeartMind*." This understanding makes Yeshua's phrase "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (become conscious of God), make more sense.

Matthew spent some time discussing what is now being referred to as the second axial age. The first axial age occurred around 800 to 200 BCE, when there was an enormous increase of spiritual understanding. It was the period in which the Buddha taught, Lao Tzu (the founder of Taoism) was teaching in China, the Rishis (writers of the Vedas) were active in India, and monotheism arose in Israel (Abraham and Sarah left their tribe to "follow God" and the Abrahamic covenant was born). Out of this incredible upwelling of spiritual awareness came a sense of transcendence and an individual quest for spiritual understanding or enlightenment. The ultimate goal became escape, or liberation from the world of matter, which was considered lesser or even evil. The problem became one of how to escape from *samsara* (cycle of rebirth in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism) or to repair the rift created by "the Fall" (Christianity). The end result was the sense that something was wrong with this world. Our spiritual consciousness became dominated by images of separation and exile.

However, slowly, over the centuries, according to many thinkers, including Matthew, there has risen the deep knowledge that "we belong." We have begun to pick up the connection with the earth and each other that existed in pre-axial times. This sense combined with the first axial age sense of transcendence, gives us the opportunity to move into a synthesis of the transcendent and the immanent to create a new world order. During the workshop Matthew pointed out that multiple strands of knowledge point us in this direction. Quantum physicists have discovered the deep interconnection of all things at the most subtle levels of matter; environmentalists are pointing out that we are part of a global ecosystem; evolutionary biologists, reveal that life is unfolding as a vast, single process.

Matthew also pointed out that this "second axial current" didn't just start recently. It is present in the Bodhisattva vow of Mahayana Buddhism (the vow to remain in the phenomenal world until all beings are awakened) and in Incarnational theology (elimination of the boundaries between the sacred and the profane—"God so loved the world" and "the Word became *flesh*"). Yeshua rejected the asceticism of John the Baptizer and pointed us to a path that fully embraces the world. He partied, feasted, and associated with those identified as outcasts and sinners. He broke the purity laws. Yeshua prayed "Thy Kingdom come *on Earth*." His teaching indicated that we belong to this world; we are interwoven into its fabric. As a teacher within the Wisdom tradition of the east, Yeshua taught us about compassionate, loving intelligence where attention (alertness, spaciousness) and surrender (a humble letting go) meet in the *HeartMind*. It is not so much about *what* Yeshua taught but about *where* he taught from. What he

taught was not a moralistic, but a transformative path.

Matthew spent some time describing the reasons why this basic teaching of Yeshua morphed into the moralistic, judgmental teaching within which most of us were raised. He followed the growth of Christianity out of its eastern foundations toward Greece and Rome, with martyrdom leading to "we/they" thinking, and finally to the moment that Christianity became an imperial identity marker within the Roman Empire with its counsels of Bishops. What one believed became all-important and led to the inquisition, witch trials, and the crusades. Yeshua's path of inner transformation was almost lost.

Now we have the opportunity to move beyond a belief and belonging system to the recognition of Yeshua as the archetype of the full union of human and divine—Christ consciousness. Yeshua is not the *exclusive* union, but the *fullness* of the human and divine union (Christ). In reference to this concept we discussed some of the Christian and Sufi mystics and their practices; and kataphatic prayer (prayer with content), and apophatic prayer (emptying the mind of words and ideas and simply resting in the presence of God). We discussed how we can learn from each other using homeomorphic equivalency, looking for deep correspondences that go beyond the words and concepts of our distinct religions or cultures to find the same or similar experiences.

We also considered the phrase "the Kingdom of God" not as a place (Heaven) or existing at a particular time (after

death), but as a state of consciousness, here and *now*. We turned our minds to Christophany (all reality as a manifestation of Christ) and reflected upon Raimon Panikkar's concept that reality is Cosmotheandric (a totally integrated and seamless fabric that is the undivided consciousness of the totality). We examined Teilhard de Chardin's concept of Christogenesis, within which Christianity is not a *path of ascent* but a *path flowing out from God*. Matter is not a distraction from God but an outworking of God in form. Incarnation awakens to itself in Christ (Form). The world is not static but constantly changing. God is committed to that change, since as the creator God embedded it in the world and now sustains it. Christ consciousness is its goal. As Paul stated in *Romans 8: 22*, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

Finally we considered the concept of the *Sacred Heart of Jesus* as the Heart of the universe, the evolutionary driveshaft of all creation; the second coming as the coming of conscious union with the divine. Referring back to the concept of axial ages we noted the rise in non-dual consciousness. We noted that evolution has been acting unconsciously up till the present but now we have the opportunity to act consciously in it. Evolution has become aware of itself. We must choose to deepen the disclosure of the Heart of God. Christ is the endpoint (the *Omega*). However this convergence is not inevitable. If the second axial age is to manifest we must choose and act! ✦

Matthew leads a period of reflection, meditation and prayer. PHOTO Sher Saks



Matthew Wright. PHOTO Sher Saks



Bronwen and Morrie. PHOTO Sher Saks



Consolidated Trust Fund Presentation 2015

RANDY MURRAY

Communications Officer & Topic Editor

Rob introduces Paul and Trevor. PHOTO Randy Murray



Trevor Reilly. PHOTO Randy Murray



PHOTO Randy Murray



Approximately one dozen treasurers and wardens of the diocese of New Westminster braved heavy rains and winds to meet at St. Stephen's in West Vancouver on the morning of Saturday, December 5 to participate in the annual presentation regarding the diocesan Consolidated Trust Fund (CTF). The 2015 version was presented by Institutional Portfolio Manager's (IPM), Paul Martin and Trevor Reilly of Phillips, Hager & North (PH&N) Investment Management.

At 9:40 am, the business administrator of the diocese, Rob Dickson explained that diocesan treasurer, Bob Hardy, was unavailable and had sent his regrets. Rob welcomed the group and directed their attention to the disclaimer on the back page of the presentation document prepared

by Paul, Trevor and the PH&N administration staff. He pointed out that what would take place that morning is not an Annual General Meeting, not an official gathering but an information sharing session done as a courtesy by PH&N. The presentation and the presentation document are not intended to provide professional advice and should not be relied upon in that regard, the presentation document

is intended for the information of institutional investors only.

Paul Martin provided some background information about PH&N relating to the firm's history, the fact that it was purchased by the Royal Bank of Canada in 2005, and its relationship with the diocese. PH&N are expert in, and focus on, the type of institutional investing done by the diocese.

Directing people's attention to the presentation document, Paul pointed out graphics and text supporting his statement that "it has been a very good market" and said, "These are the good old days." Paul went on to say that it is time to adjust expectations. The last five years have seen an overall growth of 9% annually, but now we must adjust

our expectations somewhat and look for growth in the neighbourhood of 5%. With the continued drop in interest rates, the bond market, which the diocese is invested in, is unlikely to produce more than 2% growth. Also, volatility in the market is currently quite low by historical standards and that is unlikely to continue forever, a correction is expected. Paul also said that virtually everybody in the market expects interest rates to go up, but the expected rise in rates will not substantially affect the investment strategy for the diocese. He continued to lead the group through the presentation document which illustrated that the performance of diocesan investments was uniformly positive and above the benchmark (benchmark is a standard against which the performance of a security, mutual fund or investment manager can be measured. Generally, broad market and market-segment stock and bond indexes are used for this purpose). In fact, the diocesan investments have performed above stock market benchmark performance for the past four years.

The general view is that the Canadian economy is sluggish at the moment. Energy and materials (mining) stocks are down and for that reason among others the Canadian dollar is low. Paul said, "as ridiculous as it may sound, because of interest rates, housing affordability in relation to income has remained relatively constant over many years." Markets didn't react very strongly to the results of the Canadian federal election.

He went into more detail saying that the "underperformance of the Canadian dollar aids foreign investment" but relying on this strategy can be risky if the Canadian dollar were to suddenly rise. Financials and energy are the largest drivers; drops in energy returns will in turn affect the other financial areas like banking and development. He said that it is not normal for currency to play such a major role in investment return. Paul said, "From 30,000 feet it looks like there should be some concern about Canadian banking but that is not the case from the halls of the Canadian banks." There is still a great deal of confidence from the banking constituency in our economy. When Paul was challenged on this point he said that what we must remember is that a large share of banking revenue comes from all of us paying our mortgages, living day to day.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



Those born between 1935 and 1945 grew up in exciting, difficult times. But the war was soon over and a new world of opportunity awaited those coming of age. Now, well on in life, war babies need to be intentional with their personal finances, especially as so many have a generous heart.

Rosie, a 75-year old widow, plans to make a large bequest gift to the Anglican Initiatives Fund to support new ministry needs. By careful planning of her open savings and investments she obtains significant financial benefits. Rosie eliminates her income tax payable and the OAS clawback. She increases her net annual income and her charitable giving, so she sees the impact of her gifts during her lifetime. On death, the value of Rosie's bequest gift also will be higher.

To learn how you can do this and to receive a plan designed just for you, call Glen Mitchell, Diocesan Stewardship & Gift Planning Director.

Glen's number is (604) 684-6306, Local 218; or you can email him in confidence at:

gmmitchell@vancouver.anglican.ca.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

• Ecumenical Advent Service in West Vancouver •

SUBMISSION Caitlin Reilley Beck

To celebrate Advent as a season of unity and harmony, leaders and choirs from different Christian denominations gathered at St. David's United Church in West Vancouver on December 6 for the now annual Advent Ecumenical Carol Service. The choirs and other musical guests came from across the Lower Mainland and each performed pieces on Advent themes. The music represented the breadth and diversity of the Christian hymnody of Advent: from the "O" antiphons of *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* and an 8th century Armenian Orthodox Marian hymn to African-American spirituals, to Schubert, to songs written and performed by local artists.

The carol service also included the lighting of the advent wreath along with

prayers and scripture readings. The Rev. Fr. Robin Ruder-Celiz, chair of the Ecumenical Multifaith Unit in the diocese, was part of the organizing team and preached at the Sunday afternoon service.

In addition to including a diversity of Christian traditions, the service was also intergenerational as the choirs and congregation included children, youth, adults and seniors, all joining together in song and prayer.

As a part of the carol service, a collection was taken to support the work of the Menonite Central Committee with the people of Syria. The service closed in candlelight as the light from the Advent candles was passed to each person in the room as the congregation sang *Silent Night*. ✠

LEFT The Rev. Dr. Michael Caveney, lead minister at St. David's United Church offers the Opening Prayer. RIGHT Glen Chatten of St. Andrew's-Wesley performing an original piece titled, *The Door to Bethlehem*. PHOTOS Caitlin Reilley Beck



LEFT The choir of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Orthodox Church. In this photograph they are performing a modern piece called *Night Has Descended*. RIGHT The Rev. Fr. Robin Ruder-Celiz preaching. PHOTOS Caitlin Reilley Beck



The St. David's United Church choir. PHOTO Caitlin Reilley Beck



The Fatima Ecumenical Choir from the Tri-cities area. PHOTO Caitlin Reilley Beck



• ACW Hospital Chaplaincy Challenge Met for 2016 •

SUBMISSION John Stephens

Current VGH Anglican Chaplain, the Rev. Liz Hamel. PHOTO Randy Murray



During the December 9, 2015 meeting of Diocesan Council, the Ven. John Stephens, Archdeacon of Vancouver and rector, of St. Philip, Dunbar reported the following information about the funding of the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) Anglican Chaplaincy.

In the fall of 2015, it became clear that the funding for the position of the Anglican Chaplain at VGH was not going to be available for 2016. St. John's Shaughnessy had supported the position for 2015, but they were not able to continue funding the ministry on their own. The Anglican Churches of the west side of Vancouver, the Vancouver Archdeaconry, started a conversation about how they might be able

to support this role for 2016.

Those of you who read the November 5, 2015 web story and the *Topic* story on page 17 of the January 2016 issue will know that the Anglican Church Women (ACW) of our diocese got wind of this as well and clearly wanted to ensure that we continue to have a chaplain at this large Vancouver hospital that brings in patients from all over the province. The ACW laid down a challenge at the Diocesan Council Meeting on November 4 and told Council that they were going to give two cheques totalling \$12,000 directly to Bishop Skelton that evening to cover the first six months of 2016.

Later during the Council Meeting, the Rev. Dr. Richard Leggett reported that St. Faith's would commit \$4,000 to the position. From there, St. Mary's, Kerrisdale, committed \$4,000, St. Philip's \$3,000 and St. John's Shaughnessy \$3,000. The position of Anglican Chaplain is now fully financially supported for 2016.

However, there is another piece to this. All of the donations given have come with a stipulation that this method of funding will not be available in 2017. The challenge has been given to our diocese that together we need to find a way to financially support this position for 2017, and going forward from there.

Director for Stewardship and Planned Giving for the diocese, Glen Mitchell is working with the Hospital Chaplaincy Task Force (HCTF) appointed by the Mission and Ministry Development Committee (MMD) of the diocese of New Westminster to look closely at hospital chaplaincy in our diocese and report back.

The HCTF held an exchange of ideas and information session the morning of Saturday, January 23, sending out in mid-December 2015, an invitation to those in our diocese interested in hospital chaplaincy.

The intention of this Saturday morning session was to help the HCTF with their two tasks:

1. To gauge the level of interest across the diocese for this ministry in hospitals, seniors residences, extended care facilities, correctional facilities and other appropriate places where acute and residential care is given.
2. With an affirmation of interest, the second task of HCTF is to make recommendations to Diocesan Council through MMD on how the chaplaincy ministry could be implemented.

There will be more information about the work of the HCTF in future issues of *Topic* and in the news page posts of the diocesan website. ✠

"...the choirs and congregation included children, youth, adults and seniors, all joining together in song and prayer."

The nave in darkness with the candles lit. PHOTO Caitlin Reilley Beck



AROUND THE DIOCESE

• Clergy News Around the Diocese •

Prepared with files from Douglas Fenton

The Bishop has appointed the Rev. Paul Bowie, rector of All Saints', Mission as Regional Dean of Golden Ears effective January 1, 2016. Paul succeeds the Rev. Charles Balfour who resigned as regional dean due to his retirement on December 31, 2015.

The Rev. Howie Adan, supply priest at Holy Spirit, Whonnock has accepted an appointment as Head of Multifaith Chaplaincy at London Heathrow. He will begin his new ministry on March 1, 2016. Howie also made his presence known in our diocese over the past year through his excellent op/ed contributions to *Topic*. Howie's final contribution to *Topic* as priest with permission to officiate in our diocese is his Ash Wednesday Reflection published in this issue on page 18. We wish him well as he undertakes this ministry for which he has a deep passion and we encourage him to keep in touch.

The Rev. Nick Parker, who resigned as Senior Port Chaplain at the Mission to Seafarers, effective December 31, 2015, has been providing Sunday supply ministry to the parish of St. John the Divine, Squamish for much of 2015. The bishop has appointed Nick, half time priest-in-charge (vicar) of that parish effective January 1.

The Rev. Christine Rowe has been appointed assistant to the rector half time at St. Mary's, Kerrisdale effective January 1. Christine will job share with the Rev. Elizabeth Ruder-Celiz who as of this writing is interim priest-in-charge at St. John's, Shaughnessy. Elizabeth will begin her new ministry at St. Mary's, Kerrisdale following the appointment of a rector for St. John's, Shaughnessy.

The Rev. John Firmston has been

The Rev. Christine Rowe. PHOTO Randy Murray



The Rev. John Firmston. PHOTO Randy Murray



appointed half time interim priest-in-charge at St. Alban, Richmond effective February 1.

The Rev. John Sovereign has been extended as rector, St. Thomas, Chilliwack and Regional Dean of the Valley to April 2017.

On December 29, 2015, the Rev. John Marsh priest-in-charge of St. George/St. Mark's, Vancouver suffered a stroke while visiting Waterloo, Ontario. John's wife, the Rev. Paulina Lee, rector of St. Chad's was with him. With this issue of *Topic* going into final layout as of this writing in early January we were told that his condition following the stroke was described by medical professionals as "serious but not critical." The stroke has affected the left side of his body. Information about John's condition was circulated as it became available. Please pray for John and for Paulina and please keep the people of St. George's/St. Mark's, and St. Chad's in your prayers. ✚

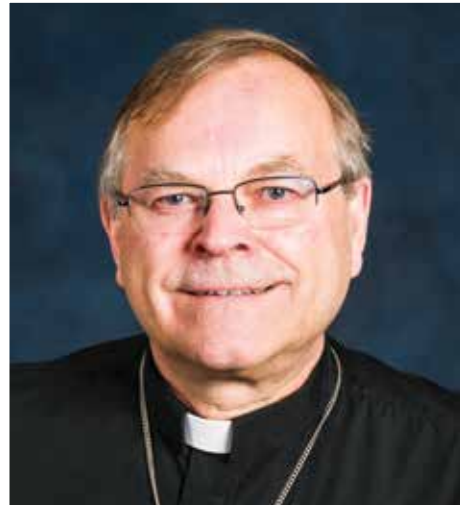
The Rev. Howie Adan. PHOTO Howie Adan



The Rev. Paul Bowie. PHOTO Wayne Chose



The Rev. John Sovereign. PHOTO Wayne Chose



• Top 10 Under 20 •

Congratulations to Kate Hodgson, a first year student at the University of British Columbia (UBC), member of St. Helen's, Point Grey and current youth member of Synod from that parish. Kate was profiled in the December 26, 2015 *Globe and Mail*

article as one of British Columbia's "10 under 20" young activists. Kate is a committed supporter of, and participant in Climate Action activism. Here is a link to the story on the Globe's website, <http://bit.ly/1mqMYvr>. ✚

• VST Receives Major Funding from United Church of Canada •

SUBMISSION Shannon Lythgoe

On December 8, 2015, it was announced that Vancouver School of Theology (VST) is to be the recipient of \$500,000, a portion of the assets generated by the recent disbandment and subsequent sale of the Capilano United Church. For VST, this catalyst gift will initiate the creation of a designated fund that will financially support a robust United Church of Canada presence in the faculty and program of the school.

The decision to distribute these funds to VST involved former members of the congregation, Vancouver-Burrard Presbytery, and BC Conference.

VST would also like to acknowledge that the national United Church has recently restored funding in support of a United Church faculty position at VST, which further strengthens the ability of VST to provide denominational training to its United Church students.

VST is grateful for the ongoing support of the United Church of Canada for these significant contributions, as we strive to form and educate thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders for the church in the 21st century. ✚

• Soup & Bun Workshops at St. Paul's •

SUBMISSION Tom Esakin

Writing Your Will

DATE Thursday February 18, 2016

TIME 12 noon – 2 pm

LOCATION St. Paul's Anglican Church
1130 Jervis Street, Vancouver

This workshop will be given by the People's Law School and presented by David Watts, Notary Public; with both Fr. Michael Forshaw sharing some "Horror Story Vignettes" of parish experiences when parishioners do not have their end-of-life documentation in proper legal order; and Glen Mitchell, the Director of Stewardship and Planned Giving for the diocese of New Westminster, participating with some reflections.

Powers of Attorney, Joint Bank Accounts, Representation Agreements, & Advance Directives

DATE Thursday March 10, 2016

TIME 12 noon – 2 pm

LOCATION St. Paul's Anglican Church
1130 Jervis Street, Vancouver

This workshop will be given by the BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support (BCCEAS), and presented by BCCEAS Workshop Coordinator Lin Chen.

For more information go to the St. Paul's website at www.stpaulsanglican.bc.ca or phone 604.685.6832. ✚

• Art & Spirit at St. Anselm's for March 2016 •

SUBMISSION Alex Wilson

Following on the success of St. Anselm's *Earth and Spirit Series* this past fall, the parish is pleased to announce that Robert Bateman will kick off the *Art and Spirit Series* this spring on March 2, 2016, at 7:30 pm.

A member of the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia, the accomplished and acclaimed artist Robert Bateman will help deepen our conversation with art and the nurture of faith in a modernist world. Renowned for capturing the beauty of British Columbia on canvas,

Mr. Bateman will be followed by other prominent Canadian artists from across the disciplines during the March series.

Dates are: March 2, 9, 16 and 23 all starting at 7:30 pm. Our evenings will end with a reception and time for us to engage more personally with each of the speakers.

Entrance by suggested donation of \$10.

See the poster below. A downloadable copy of the poster is available from the events pages of the diocesan website. ✚

Art & SPIRIT
a speaker series
exploring the relationship
between art & faith
4 Wednesdays in March

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesdays in March, 7:30pm



Robert Bateman, March 2nd, 2016
More guests to come

Join us in March as we explore the relationship between Art and faith with leading artists in Canadian Culture.

With figures like Robert Bateman, and others, we will seek to deepen the conversation between the art world and our faith.

Evenings Start at 7:30 and end with a chance to meet the speaker at a reception.

for more info visit
stanselms.ca/events

St. Anselm's
ANGLICAN CHURCH

5210 University Blvd
(across from University Golf Course)
604.224.1410



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Advent Worship & Events Photo Sampler

We hope you enjoy the following pages of photos, offering just a small sample of what went on around the diocese during Advent 2015.

Live Nativity on Nanton Street.

A Live Nativity, complete with an onsite petting zoo, was produced by Salal and Cedar Watershed Discipleship on the afternoon of December 19, 2015, with assistance from the Diocesan Arts Ministry, St. John's, Shaughnessy and the Synod Office. This unique and entertaining Christmas pageant took place on the green between St. John's, Shaughnessy Church and the building that houses the Trendell Lounge and the Synod Offices.

The mobile petting zoo situated in the driveway beside the north entrance to the church was a big hit. The donkey of course was featured in the pageant. There was also an infant as the baby Jesus (not part of the petting zoo)!

From the following photos you can see that the acting was enthusiastic and compelling.

A good crowd gathered despite the forecast of heavy rains and chilly winds. The inclement weather that was forecast did arrive, but held off until the performances were completed. ✚

MORE ADVENT WORSHIP & EVENTS ON PAGES 12 – 15

- 1. A quintet from St. John's, Shaughnessy led the singing.
- 2. Prior to the performance, the Magi prepare. The Innkeeper is on the left.
- 3. The Rev. Clare Morgan costumed in her role as one of the "heavenly host" plays some music prior to the beginning of the pageant.
- 4. The spectators lined the perimeter of the green between the church and the administration building at 1490 and 1410 Nanton Avenue.
- 5. The Rev. Laurel Dykstra, priest-in-charge of Salal and Cedar welcomed everyone.
- 6. The Narration team.
- 7. The pageant begins with Joseph being very happy about his betrothal to Mary.
- 8. Mary is quite skeptical upon learning about her future from an Angel of the Lord.
- 9. Joseph is upset about Mary's news of her imminent motherhood, however the Angel is there to intervene.
- 10. Having listened to the Angel, Joseph begins to get used to the idea.

- 11. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and Mary compare bellies.
- 12. The nasty Innkeeper had a sign on his back which read "Herod in 0016 — Let's make Bethlehem Great Again."
- 13. The journey to Bethlehem with the real donkey.
- 14. The "stork" brings the baby to Mary.
- 15. The driveway by the North door of St. John's, Shaughnessy was converted into a petting zoo.
- 16. The sheep and goats in the petting zoo.
- 17. With the news of the birth of the Christ child, the shepherds and heavenly hosts.
- 18. King Herod. Boooo... Hisssss...
- 19. The Magi following the Star of Bethlehem.
- 20. The cast — Nativity Tableau.

PHOTOS Randy Murray



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Advent Worship & Events Photo Sampler

The Second Sunday of Advent at Holy Trinity, Vancouver

On Sunday, December 6, 2015, Bishop Skelton visited Holy Trinity, Vancouver. This was her first official episcopal visitation to the parish and there was a lot going on. For Advent, Holy Trinity had switched to having only one Sunday morning service at 10:30 am. This Advent Celebration of the Eucharist also contained the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. There were two adult baptisms, Kate Mackin and Nobby Rabet both Holy Trinity parishioners. Following the baptisms, Kate, Nobby and Sharon Smith of the parish of St. George, Vancouver were confirmed by Bishop Skelton.

As has become customary, Bishop Skelton met with the rector, the Rev. Karl Przywala and with the lay leaders of the parish. She later commented that her experience with Holy Trinity's lay leadership was uplifting and encouraging. ♦

1. The Praise Team rehearses prior to worship.
2. Advent window décor.
3. The second candle on the Advent Wreath is lit.
4. Lighting the candles in the nave.
5. The Bishop and server, Liz Bell smile as they listen to the rector's welcome.
6. Bishop Skelton's husband, the Rev. Eric Stroo of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia was the deacon of the word and table for the Eucharist. Here he is reading the Gospel, *Luke 3: 1-6*.
7. Bishop Skelton spoke about John the Baptist's message in the Gospel reading. "Repent," John says. "Change your mind, turn in another direction, go a different way. And don't let this simply be a momentary thing. Let it be a complete reorientation of who you are, of how you see things and of what you do. For God is not just calling you to repent for the moment. God is calling you to give yourself over to a baptism of repentance — a full initiation into an alternative community."
8. The candidates for baptism are examined.
9. Prayers over the font prior to the baptism.
10. The Rev. Karl Przywala baptizes Nobby Rabet.
11. The three confirmands are presented by the Rev. Karl Przywala.
12. The Bishop confirms the newly baptized Nobby Rabet.
13. The Eucharistic Prayer.
14. Holy Communion.

PHOTOS Randy Murray



Advent Worship & Events Photo Sampler

The Archivist Visits ACW House

Anglican Church Women (ACW) of the diocese of New Westminster is one of our diocese's most enduring organizations. This is also a very active organization that has generated a great deal of history over the decades; much of that material is part of the collection of the diocese of New Westminster's Anglican Archives. The current archivist of the diocese, Melanie Delva paid her first visit to the ACW House located in a light industrial section of South Burnaby during the Annual ACW Open House on December 8, 2015.

The ACW members were delighted with Melanie's visit and gave her a guided tour of the facility. Amongst a variety of fundraising and compassionate service initiatives, one of the principal purposes of the ACW location is to prepare donated clothing for shipping, primarily to remote northern destinations in order to help those in need. ♦

1. Melanie arrives at the ACW House front entrance. The large loading door for donations is around the back.

2. Smiling faces... Is that a disposable camera??

3. The Open House party is in full swing in the common room located near the front entrance.

4. Everyone make a note for next year and plan to visit the ACW Open House, probably the best looking and best tasting home baking in the diocese.

5. The current lists of bundle and donations recipients.

6. ACW Past President Sheila Puls gives Melanie the tour. The ACW love their current facility. Although the ACW House in Vancouver was beautiful it was a somewhat cramped space, now there is in Sheila's words "so much more space... space to store and space to sort."

7. In the wardrobe we see new baby clothes, blankets and accessories many handknitted by ACW members. Babies receive only new donated items. There is room for more so please contact your parish ACW or the ACW at a parish nearby.

8. Sheila Puls and current ACW President Margaret Warwick demonstrate how the tables are used to fold and stack clothing and fabrics for the bundles that are shipped up north to the recipients.

9. Metal warehouse racks of baby clothes and accessories.

10. Fish and Chip Baby Suits are usually handknitted outfits for newborns. The term "fish and chip baby" refers to infants born into poverty where newspapers are used to replace receiving blankets.

11. The loading door. Canada Freightways takes the bundles of clothing and other dry goods to Whitehorse, at a reduced freight rate, to the rectory of the Old Log Church (one of Whitehorse's oldest buildings, constructed in 1900). Bundles going to Old Crow are flown in free of charge thanks to the generosity of participating First Nations groups.

PHOTOS Randy Murray





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Advent Worship & Events Photo Sampler

Multicultural Carol Service in Surrey

On the evening of Sunday, December 20, 2015 — Advent IV, the Parish of St. Helen's, Surrey celebrated a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols liturgy for Christmas attended by 110 worshippers. The Rev. Stephen Laskey and Choral Music Leader, Lynn Turner with the talented help of readers and singers presented a multicultural version of this traditional Anglican service. Rev. Laskey wrote the following explanation as part of the intro page of the service bulletin:

"We are a diverse congregation made up of people who have come from many different parts of the world near and far. We are of different cultures and mother tongues. We bring all our strengths and gifts of vulnerability here in this community of faith together. It is this faith that we hold in common and share, to be one in Christ and to encourage one another in our faith... We will hear the story of our relationship with God in some of the variety of languages with which we first heard the Good News and sang the Carols of Christmas in the languages we first used to praise God: Malayalam, Tagalog, French, English, Kwa Kwala, Karen, Sinhalese." ✠



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1. The south side of St. Helen's nave during the procession and singing of *Once in Royal David's City*.
2. The north side of the nave during the candlelit procession and singing of *Once in Royal David's City*.
3. St. Helen's rector, the Rev. Stephen Laskey spoke to the congregation prior to extinguishing the lights and beginning the procession. He said that tonight would be a variety of "flavours" our "taste buds will be tantalized" listening to the readings offered in languages other than English or French and listening to Carols from a variety of cultures. He also informed the congregation that there would be a reflective pause of 15 – 20 seconds following each of the nine readings.
4. The First Reading, first section: *Genesis 2: 4 – 9* was read in English. The second section: *Genesis 2: 15 – 25* was read in one of the 22 official languages of India, Malayalam.
5. Mezzo-Soprano Cathy Anderson and the Rev. Stephen Laskey sang the unaccompanied Carol, *The Truth Sent from Above*. Cathy has a rich tone and the rector pleased the ears of the congregation with his tuneful light baritone.
6. The Fifth Reading: *Luke 1: 26 – 38* in the Philippine dialect Ilongo.
7. Members of the Karen Community sang a Karen Hymn of Burma, *Ler tha Ler Lu Bar*.

PHOTOS Randy Murray



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- 8. Members of the Filipino community sing the Tagalog Philippine Carol, *Ang Pasko ay Sumapit* (Christmas has arrived. Let us all sing beautiful melodies — For God is Love).
- 9. Singing the Sinhalese Carol of Sri Lanka, *Dev Kumaru*.
- 10. Singing the Sinhalese Carol of Sri Lanka, *Dev Kumaru*.
- 11. *Silent Night* — *Saltextsa ganutex Padakida 'naxwa* sung in the First Nations language Kwa Kwala.
- 12. Processing out to *O Come All Ye Faithful*.
- 13. Choral Music Leader, Lynn Turner offers the Eight Reading, *Luke 2: 8 – 2t*.
- 14. The Greeting Team joins in the singing of the Carol.
- 15. Candle bearing acolyte and choristers gather in the west transept singing the processional, *O Come All Ye Faithful*.
- 16. Choristers singing in the west transept.

PHOTOS Randy Murray



James David Cruickshank

June 10, 1936 – December 30, 2015

A bishop, theological educator, cathedral dean, and champion of the ministry of the laity, Jim Cruickshank died peacefully on Wednesday December 30, 2015 in his 80th year.

Although he spent his early childhood in Cloverdale/

The 7th Bishop of the diocese of Cariboo, elected 1992, the Rt. Rev. Jim Cruickshank. PHOTO Courtesy of the Anglican Archives of the Provincial Synod of BC & Yukon



Surrey, his family attending the Parish of Christ Church, Surrey Centre, Jim Cruickshank came to faith and formed his lifelong commitment to the Anglican Church while growing up in Prince George, a town in British Columbia's, Central Interior. He was baptized and confirmed at St. Michael and All Angels Church in Prince George, a church in the former diocese of Cariboo, the diocese where he would be bishop.

Bishop Cruickshank was educated at the University of Minnesota, the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad in Saskatoon, and the University of Chicago. He was ordained deacon in 1962 and priest in 1963 in the diocese of Cariboo.

From 1962 to 1965 Jim served as curate and vicar of the Upper Fraser Mission (All Saints, McBride with Valemount). In 1965 he became the founding Director of the Sorrento Centre and was instrumental in its development through until 1973. He then moved to Vancouver School of Theology (VST) serving first as Director of Continuing Education and later as Vice Principal and Professor of Pastoral Theology. In 1983 he was appointed Dean and Rector of Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver.

In 1992 Jim was elected as the 7th Bishop of Cariboo. In his retirement he served as an honorary assistant St. Mary, Kerrisdale, continued to teach at VST, and in his last years was a faithful parishioner at Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver.

Jim's wisdom, energy, and theological vision influenced generations of Anglican clergy and lay leaders. He was an early and passionate advocate of a church inclusive of women and men in leadership and also for the affirmation of the gifts of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. As Bishop of Cariboo he engaged with indigenous communities, offering an apology for the abuses in the Residential School system and seeking to promote indigenous leadership within the diocese. Jim engaged lay and clergy leaders with a vision of an inclusive church committed to a world of peace through justice for all; and inspired many young people to work towards making this world a reality.

Jim is survived by his son Jason (Pauline), daughter Anna, grandchildren Meika, Chloe, Sam, Maggie and Jonah, brothers Gordon and Bill, sister Pat, and ex-wife and dear friend Susanne.

As of this writing, a Requiem Eucharist, celebrating Bishop Jim's life and ministry is scheduled to take place at Christ Church Cathedral, Saturday, January 16.

Coverage of the Celebration of Life liturgy will be available in the March issue of *Topic*. ✦

Bishop Jim at the Centennial Celebration of the former diocese of Cariboo, October 19, 2014. PHOTO Randy Murray



Consolidated Trust Fund Presentation 2015

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Trevor Reilly was the principal speaker for the second part of the presentation. He informed the treasurers, wardens and parish leaders that the global-based team of invest-

ment experts working on the diocese's behalf at PH&N have been working together for ten years. He pointed out that the diocesan portfolio contains just under 40 stocks

and the team working for the diocese is focused on investing according to the "Amazon breakdown type." Amazon is a core holding in the PH&N Global Equity Fund for they are a company with strong competitive dynamics. Amazon is a company with effective brand stewardship in online retailing, creating extensive consumer loyalty. Amazon continues to gain market share as one of the prime beneficiaries of e-commerce growth trends. Amazon has demonstrated ability to expand across segments (Cloud computing) and geographies. Amazon's innovative management team continues to invest in areas outside of retailing. Amazon is also a responsible employer. These are qualities that investors look for in a company.

Trevor spent a good amount of his presentation time talking about ESG. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) refers to the three main areas of concern that have developed as central factors in measuring the sustainability and ethical impact of an investment in a company or business. ESG is often a hot topic at church meetings about investments. ESG is the more detailed next level of review and assessment following on SRI (Socially Responsible Investing). Trevor assured the group that PH&N have been focused on this type of investing for many years. The investment team uses the framework of the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPforRI). Investments by PH&N on behalf of the diocese of New Westminster are run through a third party company called *Sustainalytics* who carefully screen for our portfolios. Companies involved in fossil fuels or extraction are carefully screened, not all are removed, but many are, and the screening criteria can be changed. It is possible that the "screens" will be tightened up regarding investments held in the diocesan portfolio in the future.

The good news is that the CTF (valued at \$43,239,872 as of September 30, 2015) continues to perform well. The resources of the diocese are invested ethically and intelligently and even in what could be a more volatile investment climate in 2016 and beyond a respectable return of 4%–5% can be expected. ✦

What will the next theme be?

We will be drawing back the curtain in March to reveal the theme for the Request for Proposals process.

The Anglican Foundation of Canada is once again giving five **\$10,000 grants** in 2016 for projects to be launched in 2017.

2014 • Youth Leadership Development
2015 • Inter-faith collaboration

Keep watching!

www.anglicanfoundation.org

The Legacy of Harry Paul

CLARENCE LI

Rector, St. Hilda's-by-the-Sea, Sechelt; Regional Dean, Sea to Sky Deanery

RANDY MURRAY

Communications Officer & Topic Editor

The news of Harry Paul's death the weekend of November 14 and 15 sent shockwaves through the Lower Mainland and the Sunshine Coast. In the words of the Rev. Clarence Li, rector of St. Hilda-by-the-Sea, Sechelt (the location of the Cold Weather Shelter), "Harry was among God's beloveds, whom I came to know through volunteering at the Cold Weather Shelter these past four years. I count him among one of those 'broken saints' that the Church remembers on All Saints' Day each year. I am sad to see him leaving us so soon."

Harry was a hardworking man through most of his life, had a love of drawing and a great sense of humour. He was of Sioux ancestry and grew up in Alberta. He sometimes talked about his very difficult childhood, living with his parents and in foster care homes. He moved to the Sunshine Coast some 25+ years ago and enjoyed a good life for many years. In recent years, past demons caught up with him and his drinking increased. He had been homeless on and off for the past few years and was one of the regulars at the Cold Weather Shelter at St. Hilda's. He had a lot of health issues and as of this writing in mid-December the Rev. Clarence Li had not yet seen a coroner's report confirming cause of death. It is likely that he would have been at the shelter had it been opened that evening.

History

The Sunshine Coast Emergency Cold Weather Shelter is located at St. Hilda's Annex, a portable building on church property, which was once a local preschool.

St. Hilda's became involved providing shelter for the homeless in the winter season of 2010–2011 on an ad hoc basis. The following year, the Extreme Weather Emergency Shelter formerly operated by the Salvation Army was relocated to St. Hilda's from its location in Gibson's Landing, the town 30 kilometres to the south. As the cold weather season of 2012 wound down, it was felt that the available Extreme Weather Response for the homeless was far from adequate and a plan was put together to create a seasonal shelter that would open every night between November 1 and March 31. Through some creative funding and a broad community partnership of churches, agencies and community groups, the Sunshine Coast Emergency Cold Weather Shelter opened its doors in November 2013, and stayed open from 5 pm to 8 am for 2 wet/cold seasons. During those 15 hours the doors were opened for up to 10 guests, each assigned a mattress, pets were welcomed, dinner and breakfast were provided.

Administration

Administering this very necessary compassionate service is Sunshine Coast Homelessness Advisory Committee (SCHAC), a local ad hoc committee that has been providing oversight for the development and operation of services for people who are homeless on the Sunshine Coast. St. Hilda's is the lead agency of this creative community partnership that has operated the Cold Weather Shelter for the past three years. The Parish of St. Hilda's provides the building rent-free and hires and assists in the supervision of the staff and assumes the liability for the program.

There are two paid staff on duty every night. Last season with additional funding from the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), the program was able to fund an outreach worker to assist guests transitioning out of homelessness.

Sunshine Coast Community Services Society (SCCSS) provides payroll, accounting and financial reporting services for the program. In the past two seasons, five local churches, three services clubs and several community groups took turns providing dinner for shelter guests and others who were at risk of homelessness. Many local businesses contribute food and supplies. It is truly a community initiative.

Funding

BC Housing funds the Extreme Weather Response on nights when an extreme weather alert is issued. The funding for the rest of the season is made up of municipal grants (District of Sechelt, Town of Gibsons, Sunshine Coast Regional District, Sechelt Indian Band), private donations and community fundraising.

The budget for the previous season was approximately \$85,000 and there were plans to increase the 2015 budget to \$110,000 to improve capacity in staffing and training. With the shortfall of \$40,000 federal funding due to cuts, the program is looking for an additional \$65,000. This federal funding cut is key to the story. The federal grant for rural homelessness was not renewed for 2015 which prevented the shelter from opening and operating at its



former capacity last fall, however, following the tragedy, BC Housing stepped in on November 20 and committed \$40,000 in new operations funding to enable the shelter to reopen immediately.

Parallel to the funding shortfall situation is another important issue concerning the lack of capacity to provide a sustainable program. SCHAC is an ad hoc committee with membership made up of representatives from various agencies on the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast needs an experienced agency to support the long-term, year-round (versus seasonal) development of programs and services for people who are homeless.

According to Rev. Li, "The way Harry died on that fateful night seems to have awakened many in our province to the plight of people who are homeless in our midst. His death also highlights the lack of resources for the homeless in rural areas. Still, Harry was just one of too many marginalized members of the Body of Christ who are dying daily, often in much less noticeable and news-worthy ways. In a mystical way his death unites the suffering of all those who end up living on our streets due to mental illness and past traumas, and calls us to open our hearts and take action here and now."

The Future

Following Harry's tragic death, the phones of the Rev. Clarence Li and program coordinator, Nora Jessome were ringing non-stop for a week. The support from the community was tremendous, ranging from crowd-funding campaigns to offers of warm clothing, food and supplies. BC Housing was able to send a team of experienced shelter workers from Portland Housing Society to help staff the shelter immediately. The team from Portland also offered to assist with the training of local workers.

The current support and attention given by BC Housing opens the door for the Sunshine Coast community to secure annual operations funding for the shelter. SCHAC also began working with BC Housing on providing housing beyond shelter beds. The Sunshine Coast has a very low stock of affordable rentals that is keeping people from transitioning out of homelessness. A continuum of housing solutions from supportive housing to scattered site rentals with outreach support and trained personnel is needed.

SCHAC's dream is to have a year-round, purpose-built hub that has 6–8 supportive housing units and additional space for a small shelter program with year-round opera-

tional and outreach staffing.

The Rev. Li is passionate about grass roots involvement:

"The best way to help is to learn more about homelessness in your local area: Who are the people who are homeless? What services are available to them? Stopping trying to fix people always helps. Don't give up on people whom you cannot fix also helps. I like what Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche says, 'Transformation only happens in the context of a relationship.' Be a friend with someone homeless, look for Christ in him/her. That ALWAYS helps. Only then if you have some money or time to spare, support a local shelter.

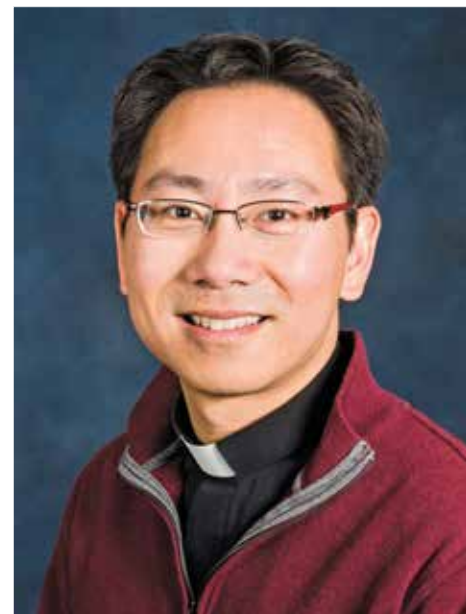
The bottom line is: no one deserves to die alone out in the elements. But let's not be fooled, an open shelter may have saved Harry that night, but Harry and those like Harry need more than a community shelter, they need affordable housing and the kind of consistent support and care that provides a place they can call HOME." ♦

Nora Jessome, Program Coordinator in the Annex office/storeroom, a new addition built by Sunshine Coast Rotary Club last year. PHOTO Courtesy of Clarence Li



LEFT Lonnie Craiggs and Cayce Laviolette with Portland Hotel Society (PHS) mental health workers Josh Delleman and Balendra Balasundaram in the kitchen of the Sunshine Coast Cold Weather Shelter on November 25 after serving dinner to guests who accessed the shelter that night. PHOTO Courtesy of Clarence Li

RIGHT The Rev. Clarence Li. PHOTO Wayne Chose





Ash Wednesday Reflections from Around the Diocese

RANDY MURRAY
Communications Officer & Topic Editor

I am the “editor of *Topic*.” I know this for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is that those words are on my business cards and the printing of those cards was organized by the administrative staff of the diocese of New Westminster. That in itself (for me at least) is confirmation. I do not normally write editorials as I leave that to skilled contributors from around our diocese and beyond who have something to say. However, I am personally very much drawn to this day of fasting; the day that marks the first day of Lent as we western Christians observe it—Ash Wednesday. For me this is the most important “Christian day,” closely followed by Good Friday, but we will leave that potential reflection topic for future issues.

I wanted to recognize the season of Lent and specifically Ash Wednesday in this February issue of *Topic*. So I put out a request to a variety of people who have been contributors to the op/ed section, and to others, in hopes that I would receive a half dozen or so Ash Wednesday reflection pieces, and lo and behold I did. I think that the five pieces that we have published are excellent and I am very grateful to: Howie, Lyndon, Liz, Lucy and Stephen for sharing their thoughts.

Participation in Ash Wednesday liturgies and presenting one’s forehead for the Imposition of Ashes is for many of us the only intentional, visual manifestation of our faith that demonstrates for others that we are followers of Jesus Christ. The funny thing is, is that if we stood on a street corner holding a Bible and asking people if they wanted to discuss even the most arcane concepts of liberal Catholicism (“you over there with the neckbeard... yes you... do have 15 minutes to talk about the Oxford Movement?”), the average person passing by would know that we were religious and probably a follower of some form of Christianity. But I’m not sure that the appearance of smudgy black crosses on people’s foreheads usually on a Wednesday in mid-February (February 10 for 2016 and March 1 for 2017) communicates that message.

In the long run it doesn’t really matter if I think this does the job or not of communicating that the person modelling the dark smeary marking is a person committed to their faith. What is important is that like the words on my business cards describing what my job is, the ashes on my forehead remind me and others that we are mortal, that our insouciance is challenged by the knowledge that our time here is limited. Our participation in this Divine Liturgy/Ash Wednesday Eucharist does not depress us or diminish us but in fact it inspires us and gives us some courage and hope to direct our lives toward the promises made at our baptism when the substances marking our foreheads with the sign of the cross were water and fragrant oils, not ashes.

Our choice to display the sign of the cross on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday is not foreboding or apocalyptic (although I must admit that at almost every Ash Wednesday Eucharist I’ve attended I will look around at the crosses of ashes and recall the *Twilight Zone* episode entitled *The Purple Testament*, where a lieutenant serving in World War II suddenly sees a strange glow on the faces of his comrades, and figures out with the help of his commanding officer, {played by Dick York of *Darren Stevens* fame} that the glow indicates who will be the next to die), it is about the present, the here and now. It is an acknowledgement that we are ready to be where we need to be and to do what we need to do to answer God’s call.

On a damp, windy Wednesday afternoon in February, a number of years ago, at about 1 pm I was late for a lunch date. I left the former location of the Synod Office at 401 West Georgia to walk down the hill to the corner of Georgia and Burrard in the heart of downtown Vancouver. I chose the south side of the street for my journey. As the traditional lunch hour was concluding, the pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk was busy, however I couldn’t help but notice as I crossed Granville Street that the teeming mass in front of me mostly moving to the east from Howe Street was beginning to part exactly in the middle of the sidewalk. As the people moved to either side I saw the late Molly Ashworth, Order of the Diocese of New Westminster (ODNW), her legs crippled with arthritis, virtually caving inward, her hands gripping the sides of her walker, fingers white from the cold and the pressure she was creating to hang on, moving slowly, each step though painful was deliberate and measured. She held her head high and on her forehead was the sign of the cross in ashes that she had just received while participating in the noon hour Ash Wednesday Eucharist at Christ Church Cathedral. As Molly made her way east maintaining her course in the middle of the sidewalk, no one jostled her, no one laughed, jeered or pointed. Moving out of her way was not the action of people who were disturbed by what they saw for their deference was out of respect, respect for this person who knew who she was and where she was going. ♦



HOWIE ADAN

Head of Multi-faith Chaplaincy at London Heathrow

I like the notion of travel more than I actually like traveling.

If my mood is right and I have nothing pressing to do I can easily spend an hour exploring the world of online maps, photo essays, travel journals and the like. Just this morning, while surveying the earth using a well-known computer application, I spotted a tiny island off the northern coast of Syria, at first no larger than a few pixels on my screen. I zoomed in to see this rocky outcrop, only to discover that the entire island is covered with houses. I wondered about the people there, what their lives must be like, and I guessed by the number of small boats in the harbor that their economy is largely dependent on fishing. I zoomed in and out repeatedly, all the way out to see the island disappear into nothing, and then in again to see it fill the screen, just as it must fill the entirety of life for any child who lives there.

“I’d love to go there,” I said out loud.

Would I really? Probably not. To actually make the journey to such a place would require a good deal of planning, money, energy and—invariably somewhere along the way—discomfort. And even if I did manage to get into Syria and make my way to that little island, I don’t think I would want to stay long. What would I gain, other than a few photos and, hopefully, some friendly encounters with the locals? Would the trip be worth it?

I have a similar feeling about Lent. I quite like the idea of it: an annual journey, a spiritual pilgrimage to confront anew my frailty and weakness, and some of those confounding dammit-why-am-I-like-this limits to my goodness. From afar it seems like a useful and worthy exercise; I’ll be a better person for it. I joke with friends about what I will “give up for Lent this year,” which symbolic comfort will I do without on my pilgrimage? Liturgically, is it an “A” year, or a “B” year? Alcohol or Booze? No, it’s a “C”: so Caffeine or Chocolate. Which is easier?

Then Lent begins. “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” I hear as I kneel on Ash Wednesday, my forehead submitting to the smear of an ashen cross. It’s all so solemn and serious, so pre-Easter. Where’s the satisfaction in this? And I know that in a day or two I will be desperate for a real cup of coffee and eyeing those chocolate bars at the checkout in Safeway, which I never do otherwise but now that they are forbidden fruit they seem especially appealing.

When we read the Old Testament prophets we often have almost no context by which to understand their message. Their words hang before us like a giant mobile; heavy, disconnected, slowly shifting as we try to comprehend what exactly it was that inspired the artist to leave us this creation, the prophet to issue the proclamation.

And although it isn’t always clear how the people of God got into the mess they are in, most of the prophets are fairly clear about the way out of it: “Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful...” (*Joel 2: 12, 13*)

Return to the Lord. This resonates deeply with something in our human psyche. The Olympics, World Cup football, or Downton Abbey (if you must) may reach millions of television viewers, but year after year the communal human events that draw far more actual participants than any other on our planet are those involving spiritual pilgrimage. Whether it be to Jerusalem, Mecca, the Ganges, or Santiago de Compostela—wherever it is that pilgrims go—hundreds of millions give heed to their spirits telling them that to find their place with God they must get up and move.

Our Lenten pilgrimage, to have any meaning, must be more than a mere notion, a hat-tip to humility or a seven-week dietary adjustment. We make our Lenten journey so that our hearts will find a new place, a better place. As with the prophets, we may not be able to identify all that contributed to our malaise, but still we know that if we make the journey, return to God with all our hearts, we too will find grace.

“Loving God, as far as you and me are concerned, I know it would be better for me to get up and move to a new place. But that requires purpose and energy, and I’m pretty low on both of those right now; a big part of me would really rather just sit and watch the others as they go on their way. And anyway, Easter, with all its hope and triumph and happiness, seems like a far country where people speak a foreign language, words my heart can’t comprehend at the moment.

But yes, I know I need to move. Help me find the direction you have for me, and help me take that first step. Today. Amen.” ♦



LYNDON GROVE, ODNW
Christ Church Cathedral, Former Editor of Topic

*"In the early morning on the lake
sitting in the stern of the boat
with his father rowing,
he felt quite sure
that he would never die."*

Indian Camp, Ernest Hemingway

Reflections on Ash Wednesday are really reflections on mortality. And mortality is on many minds. Consider Philip Roth's recent novels, *Everyman* and *Exit Ghost*, which are largely meditations on death. Roth is now in his early 80s; the stage Bill Phillips calls "the second last reel." But he can be very funny about it, as in his comments on searching for a suitable resting place, rejecting one cemetery because he knew few people interred there, and, he thought, "Who will I talk to?" A plot near his parents' graves was turned down when the gravedigger pointed out that it was too short for the tall writer, and he wouldn't be comfortable.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" is from Cranmer's superb *Book of Common Prayer*. But the phrase has been re-used many times—title of a Pinter play, a David Bowie song—and then there is the cheerfully irreverent "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust—If the women don't get you, the liquor must" (attributed to Carl Sandburg, but our guess is that it's from an old New Orleans funeral blues, the kind recreated by Louis Armstrong on *Oh, Didn't He Ramble*).

Of course, Ash Wednesday is also the beginning of Lent, the solemn season when we *miserable offenders* feel more intensely than usual that *there is no health in us* and sense our sins ever before us. It is a Lent tradition to give up something—R.S.L. McAdam, priest at St. George's, Moose Jaw, gave up going to the movies, difficult, as he was a dedicated cinemaphile. Ralph Blackman, in a Christ Church Cathedral sermon, said it was cheating to give up something you needed to eschew anyway, like cigarettes or three martinis at lunch or two orders of cheesecake. Father Bill Youngman of St. Andrew's, Nithsdale, suggested it is better to do something positive—e.g. read an uplifting book—rather than give something up.

But, stern as Lent may be, the most sombre day of the year, until Good Friday darkens, is Ash Wednesday.

*"I run to death,
and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday"*

John Donne

None of us is a stranger to death in some way. Children accept the passing of aged relatives, and young persons sometimes are shaken by the deaths of people their own age. But as we move into the Friday afternoon of our lives, we encounter more frequently the hooded figure with the scythe, and we check the obituary columns instead of career opportunities. Graham Greene told Martin Amis, "One finds that one's acquaintances die at the rate of 19 or 20 a year. I keep a rather morbid list."

One noon hour this February, silent crowds will leave Christ Church and Holy Rosary cathedrals, the smudge of oily ashes on their brows. It is curious that the priest who touched our foreheads with holy water and said, "I mark you with the sign of the cross to show that you are Christ's forever" will later touch our foreheads with ashes and say, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

There are mixed attitudes toward the ending of mortal life. Some are stoic.

Shakespeare wrote, "We owe God a death. He who pays this year is quit for next."

Some are rueful. Woody Allen: "It's not that I'm afraid of dying. I just don't want to be there when it happens." And some simply recognize the mystery. William Saroyan, in his book *Obituaries* wrote, "It is a strange event, a strange order of event, it is an order that is not accurately understood. Nobody really knows what death is."

But Easter is only 40 days ahead, and there is the constancy of hope, and the faith that the ashes will be taken from our foreheads, the ashes taken from our souls. ✠

LIZ HAMEL

Deacon, Christ Church Cathedral; Anglican Chaplain, Vancouver General Hospital

Ash Wednesday holds a special place in my heart. As a child, I was never taken to church on Ash Wednesday. My denomination did not observe the beginning of Lent with the Imposition of Ashes, and so the image of a cross of black ash smudged on the forehead was not familiar to me. I spent the first two decades of my adult life outside of the church, except when I was hired to sing in a church choir. And as chance would have it, about 15 years ago I was hired to sing at an Ash Wednesday service in an Anglican church. I was moved to stand in line, and wait my turn to have the cross of ashes sketched on my forehead by the priest. Then I heard these words spoken to me for the first time in my life: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." I was overcome with a feeling of calm and a sense of belonging to the world that God created. Yes, I am dust, the dust of God's creation—I belong here and I belong to God now and forever.

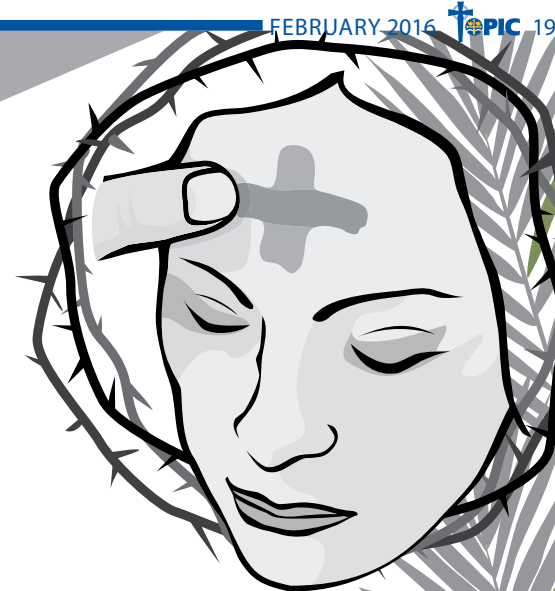
We know that ash is a symbol of repentance. In both the old and new testaments we read stories of women and men who repent and cover themselves with ashes and sackcloth. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, the season of repentance, and many of us associate repentance with doom and gloom, not the feelings of assurance and hope that I experienced on my first Ash Wednesday. So how do I reconcile hope and calm with ashes and sackcloth? Of course it can be uncomfortable, sometimes even shameful, to acknowledge aspects of our lives that we know are not what God wants for us. But the point is not to feel bad and do nothing. Not to lament and then forget. The point of repentance is to recognize how we have drifted away from God and to change our direction. The word repent means "to turn around." To repent is an act of hope; hope that we may, as the prophet Amos (5: 14) says, "Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is." Ash Wednesday is the beginning of a season of the church in which we are invited to look into our hearts and the world around us for situations which need to be turned around—situations of anxiety, depression, injustice, violence, broken relationships, and hopelessness.

For me, on that first Ash Wednesday, the words spoken by the priest evoked a sudden realization of my own sense of isolation and spiritual homelessness, which moved me to turn my life toward a God who created this beautiful world, God's world, in which I and you belong. Jesus eternally offers us forgiveness and redemption, redemption and life.

"You are dust"—these words bring to mind two images from scripture. The first is from *Genesis 2* when God formed a human from dust, and breathed life into Adam, the earthling, and Adam become a living being. On my first Ash Wednesday, I realized that I was dry, parched, thirsty for God, and what I had to do was to repent, to turn and accept the life-giving breath of God. The second piece of scripture which suggests the image of life arising from dust is *Psalms 95*, where we read that God's hands have moulded the dry land, and that we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand. I am reminded that we are not only formed by God, but also protected and sustained by God. This psalm reminds us of who we are, and that we should turn to God our creator for protection and sustenance, that we are the sheep of God's hand, we are held in love in God's hands.

For me, the steps I took towards the priest on that Ash Wednesday were, it turns out, my first steps back to the church, back to my Christian faith and identity and into the embrace of God. This Ash Wednesday, may we wear the cross of ashes as a sign of faith in a God of new beginnings, of love, and of justice. I pray that we may all see the season of Lent as a time to seek good and not evil, to turn towards the life-giving breath of God. ✠

*More Ash Wednesday Reflections
on the back page...*



LUCY PRICE
Postulant for Ordination, Diocese of New Westminster

“Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” Not a particularly cheerful part of the Ash Wednesday service that prepares us for the journey towards Easter.

Like all people, I know I’m going to die one day. On Ash Wednesday I am marked for death along with the rest of the people in my congregation and I look around the room and think, wow, all of these people will be dead one day. We all came from nothing and that’s how we’ll end up, as nothing, dust in the ground or in a jar.

After the feast of Shrove Tuesday (on which day I stuff myself with pancakes as is my tradition), Ash Wednesday is a real downer, a guilt-inducing slap in the face that says, “you are dirt, and that’s where you’re headed back to.” It can feel like that, but it’s not meant to.

Ash Wednesday is the day when Christians stare death in the face and remember where they came from in terms of God’s creation, and that God doesn’t hate what God made. Ash Wednesday can be freeing. We move through the liturgy and acknowledge that humans are sinful. Fact. Turn on the news; humans are sinful, individually, in secret and corporately on mass. God sees it all.

On Ash Wednesday when we are physically marked with ashes and remember that we will physically die one day. We are also reminded that God sees everything, and with that in mind we are free to let go of the things that prevent us from growing closer to God. This first day of Lent, offers the opportunity to figure out what we need to let die in our lives in order to grow closer to God.

This may mean that beginning our fast on this first day of Lent is not about false humility or publishing on social media what we will be giving up and then letting the world know whether we manage to abstain from coffee, chocolate or social media (if these things are keeping us from deepening our relationships with God, then they may well be good things to fast from). These things may be facades that hide what we really need to let die in our lives in order to return to God.

I once heard a wise woman say, “if you are posting it on Facebook, you might want to reexamine yourself, drop the BS and behind a closed door somewhere, acknowledge it to God and ask for help. Fast from that, and whenever you feel tempted, pray for help.”

When we hear the words, “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return,” we remember what God remembers about us. We are fragile creatures who without the breath of life that God gave us, would be nothing but dust. (*Genesis 2: 7*)

Ash Wednesday calls us to remember what God remembers about us, and reorients us to move back towards God. It could be said that Ash Wednesday is like a dirty compass that points us in the right direction by asking us to repent and remember who and what we are in relation to God. Ash Wednesday calls us to accept the gift of everlasting life through God’s grace. We are not dependent on what we do ourselves, but rather on what has been done for us in the person of Jesus Christ: God with us.

There is no magic in the ritualistic service of Ash Wednesday. Instead, there is a simple invitation to an examination of self, prayers of repentance and a reorientation towards Christ. We are asked for a commitment to allow God to be at work, compassionately and continually forgiving our attempts to do it all on our own. ✠

Ash Wednesday Reflections from Around the Diocese



STEPHEN ROWE
Rector, The Anglican Parish of the Church of the Epiphany, Surrey; Archdeacon of Fraser

For some years I was part of a clergy team (in the UK) that thumbed its nose at Lent by having an *English cooked breakfast* together on the morning of Ash Wednesday. It was not very helpful and I prefer to keep Ash Wednesday in a more traditional way these days. It is good to gather for the liturgy, which includes the Imposition of Ashes that remind us of our sinfulness and our need to turn to Christ as Lent begins. These celebrations of the liturgy are full of meaning and direction for our lives and ideally we should be present for worship on this day of days. It is a vital moment in the life of our Christian pilgrimage: for unless we begin Lent appropriately and well, we may miss the opportunity it affords.

Ash Wednesday for me has become synonymous with the poem by T.S. Eliot, which carries the same name. The liturgy (and the poem) remind us of our mortality and a call to repentance, both of which can be found wanting in our modern lives. As words in the poem are taken from the liturgy it is an excellent reading to use devotionally on Ash Wednesday itself or at any time through Lent. The later sections of the poem are a call to spiritual awareness, and the acceptance of divine forgiveness.

There is often a sense of waiting and expectation in the liturgical calendar. In Advent we prepare for the birth of Christ and in Lent we prepare for the holiest days of the year, Good Friday and Easter Day. In a society that has a craving for instant gratification waiting is definitely counter-cultural. It is a reminder that our life as followers of Christ is not a destination as much as it is a journey. Our call to follow Christ on Earth begins with our baptism and ends with our last breath. In between is a voyage of discovery,

of setbacks and opportunities. Lent, and specifically Ash Wednesday, is the opportunity to stop and reflect on our life in Christ. It is a moment to recognise our shortcomings and the things that call for change in our lives. It is the occasion for standing before God, and our fellow travellers, to realise our need to turn again, to turn back to God.

The liturgy for Ash Wednesday and its invitation to begin again, for me, is deeply moving and challenging. It is to admit that the life I am presently living isn’t the best I can do, and only by turning to God, only by admitting what is not going well, can I make any changes at all.

My sense is that all of us need to re-frame our liturgical lives on a regular basis. We have a weekly confession in Anglican liturgy for a good reason, not in case we have sinned, but because we have sinned. Although that weekly practice is important, it is also vital to have a yearly remembrance of our need to reconnect with God and Ash Wednesday is that opportunity.

The key purpose of Ash Wednesday is that it brings about a cleansing that places us on the right road to Good Friday and Easter. There is every reason for us to grasp this God-given opportunity with both hands, in order that we find our way forward. At the close of the day on Ash Wednesday there is a chance to feel forgiven, restored and reunited with God. It is the same feeling we receive when we make sacramental confession. For me it is quite simply one of the most important days in the year, one that cannot be missed in moving towards Good Friday and Easter in a sacred and faithful way.

May your Lent in 2016 be both holy and joyful. ✠