

JUNE 2025

FAITH TIDES



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Empires and the kingdom to come



Christ with Shopping Bags. Image by Banksy.

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

If you were able to go to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria between December 2024 and April 2025, you will have been able to see the *From Warhol to Banksy* exhibit. Part of that exhibit was a small piece by street artist Banksy called *Christ with Shopping Bags*.

I saw this piece during a family visit to the gallery during the Christmas season, but the image haunts me still.

As we say in the Creed, Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate. During Holy Week we reflect upon the fact that Christ was crucified by the empire.

The empire of the time was of course the Roman Empire. As Luke's gospel reminds us, Jesus' life, death and resurrection took place when Tiberius Caesar was Emperor, Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea and Herod was ruler of Galilee (Luke 3:1). When Jesus was

a child, Herod was so threatened by him that he made the terrifying order that all male children under two be killed, and when Jesus was an adult, the Empire arrested and crucified him.

Empires come and go, but what they all have in common is the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few. Empires are always after more territory, more power, more privilege. They inevitably turn first to economic coercion, then to political power, then to violence.

Trump's second term has, of course, brought empires back to the fore. We can no longer ignore the empires of the world and our part in them.

The image of Christ with shopping bags is helpful to me as it reminds me of my complicity in empire. The comforts of capitalism have lulled most of us here in the West into ignoring the plight of the poor and the hungry. In my own lifetime the gap between the rich and the poor has grown considerably here in Canada and across the globe. Earlier this year, I pulled my car into the parking lot of a supermarket only to see that someone was sleeping in a parking spot. I let them sleep, found another spot and did my shopping.

I am haunted by this moment and by the comforts I enjoy, my car, my house, the regular meals with family and friends, while "the son of man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20).

When I pray, "lead me not into temptation," I will have this image of Jesus on the cross with shopping bags in my mind. For the kingdom to come, "on earth as it is in heaven," the empire must be resisted. Our only allegiance should be to the Kingdom of God, where the mighty shall be brought down from their thrones, the

hungry filled with good things and the rich turned empty away.

Cultivating an undogmatic faith



Photo by [Linus Nylund](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *John J. Thatamanil*

It has been a difficult and beautiful month. For just shy of three weeks, I was at Dad's bedside as he had entered at-home hospice care. This last week has been marked by his passing and funeral arrangements. Those first three weeks were sacred time, for many reasons.

Dad was largely pain-free despite stage IV pancreatic cancer. Dad had full command of his cognitive capacities, and until the last few days, when he became too fatigued to speak, we were able to talk at length. And Dad was entirely at peace about his coming passing. He had lived his life well and was unburdened by regret. Most of all, he was a man of profound faith.

What I found most striking about the shape of his faith

in these last weeks of conversation was the combination of unshakeable trust in God and an open unknowing about what was to come after he broke through death's veil — about what he knew and what he did not need to know.

I found Dad's deep peace and equanimity remarkable. Given that he was a man of evangelical Christian convictions, born in India during the mid-1930s, it would have been reasonable to suppose that he was looking forward to being reunited with his wife. When I asked him, Dad just smiled knowingly, or perhaps I should say, unknowingly. His response: "Yes, some say that we will be able to recognize our loved ones in the hereafter." The noncommittal "some people" surprised me. Being that Dad was* the son of a famous evangelist from the South Indian state of Kerala, I assumed that Dad entertained traditional ideas about what was to come.

He did not. Noting his refusal to hold to a clear and definite notion of what was to come, I added, "Yes, Dad, some people, indeed, millions in India, believe in reincarnation and some even have past life memories." Dad did not then dismiss these Hindu notions out of hand. In a later conversation when the topic of reincarnation resurfaced, Dad said, "I don't think there is reincarnation; I expect some kind of heaven." Even here, there were no notes of emphatic certainty, nothing that smacked of absolutes.

So, what did Dad "know" for sure? Only that he was in death, as in life, in God's hands: "God has decided that it is time to call me home." On other occasions, I have argued with Dad about his strong account of divine foreknowledge and omnipotence. I am too much shaped by process theology to believe that each of us enters life stamped with an expiry date like a carton of

milk.

Knowing that he did not have the energy for our customary theological arguments, I listened for the essential. Here was a man who throughout his life, lived with the confidence that he was held in God's loving and tender care. He had no reason to believe that the love he tasted in life would end at death. This was the only knowledge he needed. As for the details, he was content to dwell in mystery and unknowing. His was an undogmatic faith.

I narrated my wonderment at Dad's remarkable combination of confidence and unknowing to a friend or family member (I can't now remember who; details are hard to track at such times). What I do remember is the lovely response I received: "Oh, I'm not in the least surprised; he is your father after all."

I am, at times, inclined to think that my theological formation largely took place in seminary and doctoral work. My friend's remark put me right. Quite clearly, many of my core theological intuitions and sensibilities were shaped first by my father well before I headed to seminary — including this peculiar admixture of faith and unknowing.

There is much I try to transmit both in the classroom and the pulpit, but there is little that is as precious as this gift that I received first from my Dad — the gift of a faith that does not need to know more than finite creatures are in any position to know or quarrel about. I doubt I would be the kind of theologian I am today, including in my openness to other religious traditions, without the gift of my father's loving, faithful and nondogmatic openness to the great mystery. It is a legacy for which I will always be immensely grateful.

* In the immediacy of death's wake, I do not know what tense to use when speaking of Dad.

Revitalizing Indigenous arts and music



By Sarah Kell

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #61 calls on churches to provide funding for Indigenous community-controlled culture and language revitalization projects. From 2015 to 2024, Aboriginal Neighbours took up this call by raising funds for the mentor-apprentice Indigenous language learning program run by the First Peoples' Cultural Council.

Initiated by our diocese in 1996, Aboriginal Neighbours worked to build respect and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Aboriginal Neighbours is now nearing the end of its life cycle, releasing this work

back into the local church contexts from which it grew. However, a new project in the spirit of Aboriginal Neighbours is beginning, to raise funds for Indigenous arts and music grants. We invite parishes and individuals to join us on this ongoing journey, continuing our relationship with the First Peoples' Cultural Council through its sister organization, the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation.

The First Peoples' Cultural Foundation is an Indigenous-led charitable organization created to uplift arts, language and cultural heritage for Indigenous communities, including all 202 First Nations in BC. The foundation recognizes that strengthening Indigenous art forms bolsters wellness, as individuals and communities reconnect with their artistic and musical heritage. First Peoples' Cultural Foundation grants contribute to arts and music programs throughout the province, ranging from beading, weaving and carving to musical performance and film production.

In 2023-24, the foundation provided direct funding in the arts to over 4,200 First Nations individuals, working in both ancestral and contemporary arts and music. Emily Cabrera, First Peoples' Cultural Foundation's director of partnerships and communications, shared this quote from a 2023-24 arts grant recipient:

“My mentor was so helpful in all aspects of cedar harvesting and creating, as well as stripping and storing. I have already started sharing these teachings with the communities I visit to assist with basket weaving. I have also received many inquiries from different Nations to request that I share my teachings in future classes. I look forward to sharing what I have learned with any individuals or groups who would like

to learn.”

Looking to the future, the foundation plans to continue empowering communities to rebuild cultural infrastructure, and promoting musical and artistic mentorship and knowledge transfer, so that Indigenous arts and music will be regenerated and revitalized for years to come.

As Anglicans, we are deeply blessed with musical and cultural heritage in our church communities. Supporting Indigenous arts and music grants is a way for parishes and individuals to contribute to the revitalization of Indigenous cultural heritage in BC, and to the healing of connections that were broken by past injustices.

If you or your parish would like to get involved with this project, or would like more information, please contact Sarah (sarahkell@shaw.ca) for Aboriginal Neighbours, or Emily (emily@fpcf.ca) at First Peoples' Cultural Foundation.

You can also donate directly to the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation:

- [Donate online through Canada Helps](#) (Note “Aboriginal Neighbours Arts & Music” in the message box.)
- Or by cheque payable to First Peoples' Cultural Foundation, with “Aboriginal Neighbours Arts & Music” on the memo line. Send to: 1A Boat Ramp Rd., W̱JŌE̱P, Unceded territory of W̱SÁNEĆ Nation, Brentwood Bay, BC., V8M 1N9.

Thank you for your support for reconciliation, and for

cultural heritage for everyone!

Look for future articles in this series, honouring Aboriginal Neighbours' work since 1996, and providing ideas for parishes and individuals to continue to support reconciliation.

White South African “refugees” in the US offer a troubling tale of selective sympathy



Photo by [Louis Hansel](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Vernon Foster*

When my partner and I moved from South Africa to Canada, we did so in search of a different lived experience. We wanted to live in a society where we

could feel safe, contribute meaningfully and encounter a broader diversity of perspectives. We did not come as refugees, nor did we claim persecution. Our move was enabled by privilege — economic, racial and educational. We had a choice, and we were able to act on it.

Still, our hearts remain closely connected to those we’ve left behind. Our families and friends in South Africa continue to live with very real and daily fears. Crime is a constant concern. The rhetoric of political figures — like that of Julius Malema and others — often exacerbates the sense of vulnerability, particularly among minorities. This fear is not imagined. It is lived. And the trauma that stems from such daily uncertainty can run deep.

I recognize that even within our own partnership, our experiences of South Africa are not the same. I was raised in a largely protected environment; my partner, on the other hand, has been held up at gunpoint before. We carry different memories, and different wounds.

It is from that space of complexity that I have watched with growing concern the recent decision by the US administration to offer refugee status to some white, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. These individuals are being fast-tracked for resettlement under claims of racial persecution — a narrative widely disputed by South African authorities, human rights observers and the United Nations, which did not vet any South Africans of any race or ethnicity for refugee status in 2024.

Truth be told, the treatment white South Africans have received from US immigration authorities stands in stark contrast to how refugees from other parts of the

world are processed and treated, if they can even get asylum.

The decision has raised troubling questions about how refugee systems are being politicized. [The Episcopal Church in the US has responded by refusing to participate in the resettlement of white South Africans](#) under this policy. Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe stated clearly that the church would not be complicit in what appears to be a distortion of the refugee framework.

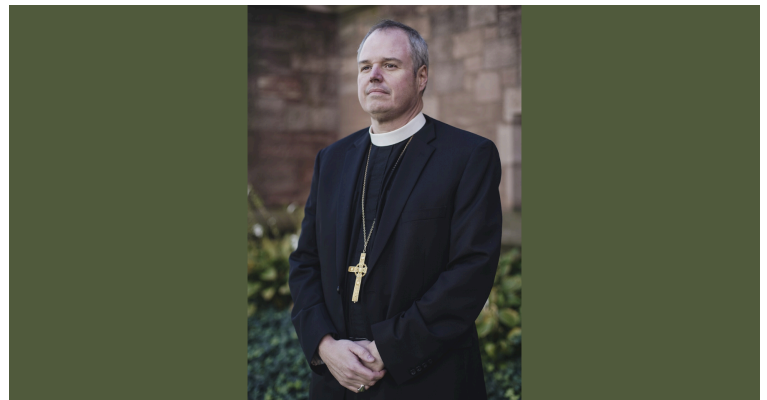
Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of Cape Town expressed his support for The Episcopal Church, noting that South Africa's equity-focused policies aim to address historical injustices, not to enact new forms of discrimination. As he rightly pointed out, white South Africans continue to benefit from the privileges of the past, even amid the country's ongoing struggles. There is truth in the statement, "When you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression."

This is not a time for us to harden our hearts — but neither is it a time to be naïve. We can and should reject the misuse of refugee systems. But in doing so, we must not lose sight of the human complexity at the heart of the matter. Some of those now seeking resettlement may be genuinely afraid. Their fears, however misplaced or amplified, are still real to them. But fear alone does not constitute persecution.

As people of faith, we are called to live truthfully. That means acknowledging the complexity of fear and trauma, especially in South Africa. But it also means resisting the temptation to hijack language meant for the truly vulnerable. We are called to stand with the displaced, not impersonate them. To welcome the stranger, not compete with them. To speak the truth, even when it challenges those who look and sound like

us.

The Episcopal Church ends its refugee resettlement ministry



Bishop Sean Rowe. Photo courtesy of The Episcopal Church.

By Naomi Racz

On May 12, 2025, presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church, [Bishop Sean Rowe published a letter](#) announcing that The Episcopal Church will be terminating its refugee resettlement grant agreements with the US federal government.

For over 40 years this refugee resettlement ministry has been carried out by the Episcopal Migration Ministries,

which has helped nearly 110,000 refugees.

The church took this decision after it was informed by the US federal government that under the terms of the federal grants, Episcopal Migration Ministries would be expected to help resettle white South Africans. Afrikaners are a white ethnic group descended from Dutch settlers.

President Trump has claimed that white South Africans are facing violence and discrimination. On Feb. 5, Trump signed an executive order stating that the policies of the government of South Africa are “fueling disproportionate violence against racially disfavored landowners” and that the US would “promote the resettlement of Afrikaner refugees escaping government-sponsored race-based discrimination, including racially discriminatory property confiscation.”

The government policies that the executive order refers to include a recent land reform law that would allow the state to take land away from its owner without compensation, if it is considered to be in the public interest. Currently, the majority of land in South Africa is owned by the white minority.

On May 14, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, primate of the Anglican Church of South Africa, wrote [a letter to Bishop Rowe](#) to express his gratitude for The Episcopal Church’s support.

“What the [US] administration refers to as anti-white racial discrimination is nothing of the kind. Our government implements affirmative action on the lines of that in the United States, designed not to discriminate against whites but to overcome the historic disadvantages black South Africans have

suffered,” writes Archbishop Makgoba.

“By every measure of economic and social privilege, white South Africans as a whole remain the beneficiaries of apartheid... we are the most unequal society in the world, with the majority of the poor black, and the majority of the wealthy white.”

While the US government has welcomed white South Africans as refugees, the operations of the US refugee admissions program have grinded to a halt.

“It has been painful to watch one group of refugees, selected in a highly unusual manner, receive preferential treatment over many others who have been waiting in refugee camps or dangerous conditions for years,” writes Bishop Rowe.

“As Christians, we must be guided not by political vagaries, but by the sure and certain knowledge that the kingdom of God is revealed to us in the struggles of those on the margins. Jesus tells us to care for the poor and vulnerable as we would care for him, and we must follow that command.”

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops announced in April that it will also end its refugee resettlement program.

Churches help Victoria bid to become pipe organ capital of Canada



Pictured seated at the organ is Christ Church Cathedral associate director of music Mark McDonald. Mark is talking to attendees at one of the evening pipe organ tours at the cathedral. Photo by Donald Hunt.

By Naomi Racz

April 26 is International Pipe Organ Day and this year the Victoria Centre of the Royal Canadian College of Organists set itself an ambitious challenge: to become the pipe organ capital of Canada.

To achieve this title, the Victoria Centre needed to record the most people playing an organ in a two-hour window. The record to beat: 131. This record was set by the Windsor-Essex Centre on April 23, 2024, with organs played across nine sites in Windsor and Essex County, Ontario.

Seven churches in Victoria participated in the Victoria Centre's bid to capture that title, including St Peter and St Paul's, St Luke's and Christ Church Cathedral.

St Peter and St Paul's in Esquimalt is home to a Conacher organ, built in 1890-91 by Peter Conacher Co. Ltd. in Huddersfield, England. The organ was originally built for and installed in St John the Divine, Victoria.

On Friday, May 22, 1891, the *Victoria Daily Colonist* proclaimed that "the finest church instrument on the coast north of San Francisco" would be played that Sunday at St John's Church. St Peter and St Paul's bought the organ from St John the Divine in 1912.

St Luke's is home to a Casavant organ built in 1925 and originally a theatre organ. St Luke's successfully fundraised to carry out repairs to the organ in 2019.

And the cathedral is home to the Hellmuth Wolff organ, which was installed 20 years ago. According to the cathedral website the organ "has been in use for more than 20,000 hours, including 4000 cathedral services, 3000 rehearsals, 200 concerts and many thousands of hours of late-night practice..."

Christ Church Cathedral has declared 2025 the year of the organ, as they fundraise the \$150,000 needed to clean and repair the Hellmuth Wolff. The next event in a series of fundraisers is [Beer and Hymns](#) on Friday, June 13, 2025. For [more information about the year of the organ and how to donate](#) visit the cathedral website.

All three churches hosted open houses to allow visitors to learn more about each church's organ and to have a go at playing them. The cathedral also hosted two

evening tours, led by the cathedral's assistant director of music, Mark McDonald. These evening tours were sold out.

According to the Victoria Centre newsletter, visitors of all ages participated — including locals, visitors from the US, an exchange student from Turkey and retired organists — and “many of them left with smiles on their faces and excitement about the organ.”

So, did Victoria claim the organ capital of Canada title? It did! In fact, there were 275 people playing the organ in Victoria between 1-3pm on April 26, 2025 — an increase of 144 from the previous record.

Photo gallery: Easter Sunday 2025 at Christ Church Cathedral

By Faith Tides

Below is a gallery of images from the Easter Day service at Christ Church Cathedral, held on April 20, 2025.





By Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria

On Friday, June 13, 2025, Christ Church Cathedral will be hosting Beer and Hymns. Doors will open at 7:30 p.m.

Beer and Hymns is an old-fashioned hymn singalong with a twist. Guests will be treated to an evening of singing hymns, accompanied by the cathedral's mighty Hellmuth Wolff organ, Victoria's largest musical instrument. The organ turns twenty this year and the cathedral has proclaimed 2025 the year of the organ. This evening of beer and hymns is part of [a series of events to celebrate the organ and raise funds for its repair.](#)

Alongside the hymn singing, the cathedral's concession stand will be stocked with beer, wine, non-alcoholic drinks and snacks. There will also be an opportunity to bid on your favourite hymn to make sure it gets included in the setlist.

"Last year we tried this for the first time," says Christ Church Cathedral's director of music, Donald Hunt. "It was so wonderful to see members of Victoria's diverse communities come together in song that we couldn't resist doing it again."

Jonathan Thomas, the cathedral's dean, sees the unique format of Beer and Hymns as an important part of the cathedral's presence in the city. "Christ Church Cathedral is a spiritual home to several hundred Anglicans, but it is also 'a cathedral for the city' – a role we take seriously. Whether you're a life-long churchgoer and hymn-singer or this is your first time in a church building, this event is for you, and you are welcome here."

Beer and hymns at the cathedral



Photo by [Josh Olalde](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Members of all faith groups, including those who do not subscribe to any religion, are invited to this all-ages event, which should wrap up around 9 p.m. Admission is by donation, with proceeds supporting the ministries of the cathedral.

Letter to the editor (June 2025)



By Faith Tides

Dear Editor,

I am very grateful for [Bishop Ingham's letter](#) in response to [my article on Bishop George Hills' opposition to segregation](#), both for Bishop Ingham's kind words and for the opportunity to expand on a theme I did not have the opportunity to discuss in my article.

In his letter, Bishop Ingham mentioned Edward

Cridge, who served as the first dean of Columbia and rector of Christ Church Cathedral until a notorious feud with Bishop Hills led him to secede from the Church of England and join the nascent Reformed Episcopal Church in 1874. Insofar as Bishop Hills is remembered among BC Anglicans, it is usually in connection with this sad dispute. But on the question of segregation, at least, Bishop Hills and Edward Cridge were of one mind.

Even before the bishop's arrival, Cridge had encouraged a policy of integrated worship. On his first Sunday in his diocese, before he had given any directions in relation to public worship, Bishop Hills noted in his diary that several Black people had been present in the cathedral congregation that morning.

In fact, while the debate over segregation raged in the wider community, Cridge championed the cause of integration from the pulpit, declaring to his flock that race was an "affair of supreme indifference before the Almighty" (quoted in Macdonald and O'Keefe, *Quiet Reformers*, p. 63). In taking up the cause of integration in January 1860, Bishop Hills was not so much initiating a new policy as reaffirming the status quo established by his dean.

BC Anglicans can be proud that, despite their later disagreements, Bishop Hills and Edward Cridge were united in their witness on this question of fundamental justice.

Sincerely,
Kieran Wilson
