

The Parish of Saint Peter's, Birch Cove

Parish Magazine

August 2025

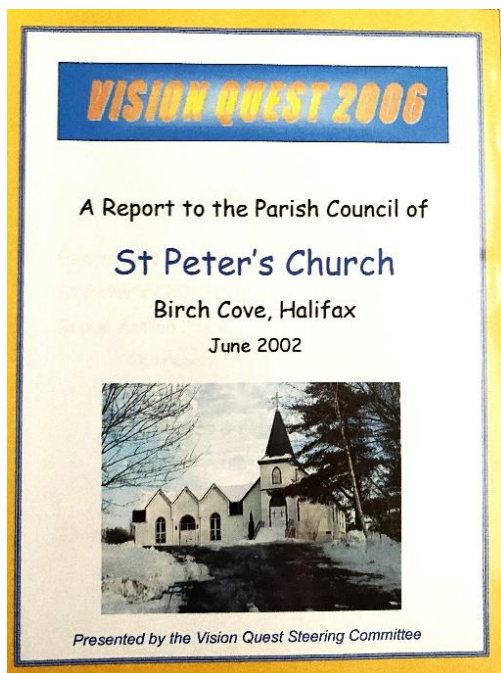


Roses on Dunbrack Street

The Pilgrimage Continues (Part Three of Three)

During its first four decades Saint Peter's modelled a traditional Anglican style parish. Changes began to occur as we approached the new millennium. When Rev. Vern Cluett retired in 1992, he had served Saint Peter's for 22 years. During the next twenty-two years, seven priests ministered to the parish; each bringing their new ideas with them. Immediately following Rev. Cluett's departure, the team of Canon Phillip and Rev. Ruth Jefferson filled in as priests in charge while the parish looked for a permanent priest. Rev. Dr. Tim Appleton arrived in 1993. Rev. Appleton had been serving in a Newfoundland parish. He and his family moved into the parish's rectory on Dakin Drive. Sadly, Rev. Appleton unexpectedly died in 2002. The Appletons were the last family connected to the parish to live in the rectory. Times were changing. Priests realized they needed to plan for their retirements and housing was part of that plan. Since the rectory was sold the capital realized has been used to generate interest which is used to provide our parish priests with a housing allowance.

In 2001 when Rev. Appleton accepted a three year position at the Atlantic School of Theology as the Director of the Foundation Programme for Anglican students, his position at Saint Peter's became a half time one. Those changes focussed attention on Saint Peter's future. Were we now too small to afford or require a full time priest? Where were we headed or better still where did we want to go? The response from Parish Council was to initiate what became known as 'The Vision Quest 2006 project.' Essentially Vision Quest was a one year undertaking (2001-2002) to plot a course for Saint Peter's for the following 5 years. The development of the five year plan was facilitated by parishioners Julie Gregg, John Starling and Sara Mitchell.



Within the year, 5 themes were identified: People, Outreach, Worship, Physical Assets, Activities & Programmes. A vision for St. Peter's emerged: "Saint Peter's is our spiritual home, where we nurture our growth in faith. By reaching out to others, together we explore new and dynamic opportunities to live Christian lives." By June 2002 the Vision Quest Steering Committee had submitted an action plan to Parish Council. It was ambitious and identified a determined parish readiness to invest energy, time and money in many different areas. Our current PAWG group was created as a result of Vision Quest 2006. The goal would be to attract new parishioners and to improve and increase services and opportunities for parishioners already attending Saint Peter's. Vision Quest 2006 contains many action plans that the parish could still benefit from pursuing twenty years after it was published.

Following Rev. Appleton's passing the Reverend Jim Purchase was appointed priest-in-charge at Saint Peter's until 2003 when Reverend Jane Clattenberg accepted the parish's invitation to move to Birch Cove. Rev. Clattenberg was at that time a parish priest in Digby.

It was during Rev. Clattenberg's tenure at Saint Peter's that a major reconfiguration of the altar and choir sections of the church was undertaken. The altar prior to 2003 had basically remained where it had been placed in 1951. That was against the east wall under the "Good Shepherd" window. During communion the priest would face the altar with his or her back to the congregation. This all changed when the altar rail was removed and replaced with an arched altar rail protruding out towards the congregation. This provided more room for the altar to be moved away from the east wall. This in turn allowed the priest to stand behind the altar, back to the east wall and facing the congregation.



Reconfigured Altar Rail and Altar

The changes made to the altar rail necessitated changes to the choir area of the church. Again, pews which had been in place since the opening of the church were removed. The pews were replaced with chairs. This new arrangement also allowed for the choir area to be reimagined for different purposes. For example, a digital piano now sits in the choir area. While our music director, for most services, sits out front with the choir, she can also retreat to the organ loft and use the organ when needed. However, by sitting out in the choir area, Music Director Heidi can participate in musical selections with the choir much more easily.

Changes to the altar and choir area of the church resulted in far more positive results than another major event which occurred in 2007-2008. What was one of the most divisive periods of Saint Peter's past 75 years, a move to merge the parish of St. Peter's with the Parish of Saint John's Fairview, ended up creating division and hurt that was uncharacteristic of what life had been like at Saint Peter's until then and what it is like today.

One would have thought that a merger between churches (Saint John's) that sponsored its own chapel of ease (Saint Peter's), that worked together on projects like the West End Ecumenical Food Bank together and which were facing shrinking congregations, would have been a 'slam dunk'. NOT. Saint John's had sold its building and property where Shoppers Drug Mart now stands on Dutch Village Road. Trinity Anglican had been given permission to move from Brunswick Street to Main Street in Fairview. So, Saint John's had to move somewhere. Saint Peter's had property and could be enlarged to accommodate a larger congregation. There were those however who wanted to see St. Peter's sold and the money realized from the selling of both properties used to build a much larger church somewhere else. (Saint John's eventually built at the corner of the Hammonds Plains Road and Larry Uteck Blvd.) While there were positive aspects to both plans, the stakes were high for Saint Peter's . In the Anglican tradition of the time, once a church closes , nothing is taken to the promised land, in our case not even our stained glass windows would have been taken to the new site. At the meeting, held to decide on the merger the vote was taken and it was a tie vote! Under parliamentary procedure a tie vote means the motion isn't adopted. While efforts were made by some (including the bishop at the time) to push the decision to merge forward, they did not succeed. Saint Peter's would remain in Birch Cove where it had been built. The church didn't leave ... but some parishioners did. Our current music director, Heidi Jury arrived in late 2008 . Her first assignment - to help in healing the wounds caused by the attempted merger.

The arrival at Saint Peter's of Reverend Robert Richmond in 2008 had to be one of the more dramatic U-turns in Rockingham history. You see Rev. Robert , growing up, had been known in Rockingham-Fairview as 'Richie'. Richie was a base guitar player in the well known and popular rock band 'Peppertree'. The band cut records with Capitol Records. They toured throughout Great Britain and even played at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto where the band that opened up for them was 'Three Dog Night'. Richie however decided that while music was his life he wanted to do more. He recounted the time he approached his former principal, Paul Fiander, at Halifax West High School, asking for a recommendation to attend university to become an Anglican priest. Richie's former principal almost fell off his chair!



During Rev. Robert's time at Saint Peter's the parish experienced some novel and others might say naval experiences. One Battle of the Atlantic Sunday Service was held on the shores of Bedford Basin. On another occasion the parish held a jazz mass. The Lieutenant Governor visited Saint Peter's as did the well known CBC broadcaster Stan Carew and his band. It was during Rev. Robert's tenure that our digital piano and big screen were installed. **Left-Wardens Mike Horwich & James Gregg escort the Lt. Governor, Her Honour Mayann Francis, to her car.**

From 2013 until 2017 Rev. Dave Dellapina served as priest at Saint Peter's . Rev. Dellapina was followed by Rev. Elliott Siteman who served from 2017 until 2020. When Rev. Siteman unexpectedly went on leave in 2020, Saint Peter's was alone, like the rest of the world, facing the onslaught of the covid pandemic. However, the issues facing Saint Peter's were even more complex than most parishes. The Diocese at that time had no bishop and until a bishop was elected no replacement for Rev. Siteman could be appointed, even if the parish found someone. For two years the parish was basically run by parishioners. In particular Warden Art MacDonald should be singled out for the incredible amount of time and effort he put into addressing the needs of the parish. For long periods of time regular in-person Sunday services were ' off '. The parish pivoted and thanks to the leadership of Ros Hood Morris, an on-stream video service was launched. That service continues to this day. The last wedding to be held in the church, due to our on line streaming possibilities, was viewed ' in real time ' by extended family members in both India and Mexico as well as Nova Scotia. Retired priests and parishioners Rev. Glen Kent and Rev. Dennis Walsh took services.

Warden MacDonald approached Glenn Taylor who started a weekly newsletter to keep parishioners connected to the church. That newsletter morphed into " What's Up Down at Saint Peter's " which is still published every two weeks during the fall, winter and spring. It boasts a regular readership of close to 90% of parishioners. A summer magazine has also been published (**Right: Guild Covid Cookie Sale**)



for the past three years. During the two years 2020-2022, of the triple whammy (no priest, no bishop and no in-person services), Saint Peter's parishioners became quite innovative at ' being an active faith community '. Even when we were not permitted to have a Christmas Eve in-person service, a recorded service was sent out via You Tube, a parish Christmas tree was lit and Christmas carols rang from the church steeple.



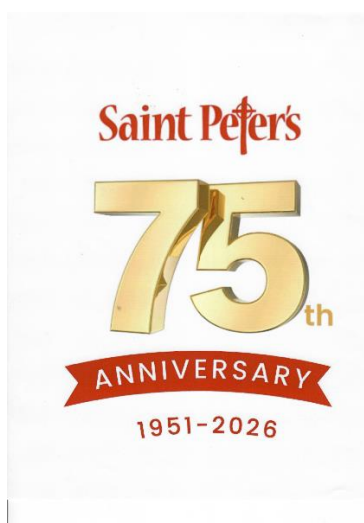
Left: damage done by lightning strike . Now still on the subject of the church steeple, during covid in 2019, the church was struck by lightning. While there was considerable damage to the office telephone and computers, the building itself didn't catch fire and no one was hurt. Who says life at Saint Peter's can't be electrifying.

In 2022 Rev. Arran Thorpe, who was serving in the Ottawa Diocese, returned to Nova Scotia and accepted an invitation by our parish to become priest at St. Peter's. In the last three years, the achievements and successes at St. Peter's have been nothing short of amazing. A Sunday School has been reestablished. The building and property have gone through a major refit and modernization. The congregation is growing and the local community has rediscovered its local church. Attendances at the last two Christmas Eve services, compared to the empty silent church during covid on Christmas Eve 2020, tells it all.

The parish is now preparing to celebrate its 75th birthday during 2026. The theme chosen for the anniversary year is "The Pilgrimage Continues". As we look back at what Saint Peter's has been for the past 75 years, we know we must also look to the future and the challenges and opportunities ahead. For a small church, built in an almost rural seaside setting, now surrounded by a fast paced urban community, the pilgrimage continues.



A Full House on Christmas Eve 2024



“We Drew a Circle on a Map and Said ‘ Let’s Go.”

An interview with Valeriia and Viktoriia Hrushetska

For a young person, it isn’t easy moving out of the home in which you grew up. In addition to the challenges a young person faces today, like finding a place to live and finances, what if you throw in starting a career, moving to another country, and ... a war! Viktoriia Hrushetska has been dealing with all those challenges and more for over five years. Viktoriia moved from her home in Kiev to Poland after attending university in Ukraine.

I asked why Poland and how she ended up in Canada. The answer was that she knows Polish and was confident she would be able to find a job easily. Indeed, it wasn’t difficult for her to find work, as she was fluent in both Polish and English. I also asked about Canada. The answer was that before Russia invaded Ukraine, it wasn’t that easy to obtain a visa to come to Canada. When that changed, Viktoriia decided to apply, and her application was quickly accepted. She ended up in Edmonton.

Valeriia, while following in her older sister’s footsteps, hasn’t walked the exact same path nor for as long. Valeriia left home three years ago and moved to Poland first to be with her sister. When Viktoriia flew to Canada, Valeriia had no one left in Poland. She didn’t know what to do, because due to time zones it would be difficult for her to continue her online studies. But when the opportunity arose, she decided to move to Denmark – only a one-hour difference for her online education. Valeriia studied English and French at university in Ukraine. In Denmark, Valeriia continued her studies online, tutored several children in English, and at the same time managed a restaurant! Nothing like multitasking! When the opportunity presented itself to join Viktoriia in Canada, she took it. While this explains how both young women ended up in Canada, it doesn’t explain how they ended up attending an Anglican church in Birch Cove. The answer to that question told me a lot about both Viktoriia and Valeriia, about churches, and about how we learn.

Like many young people in predominantly non-English speaking countries, Valeriia and Viktoriia learned a lot of English from watching movies on television. But it wasn’t just English they gleaned from watching TV. Viktoriia and Valeriia also learned from those movies that churches in North America are completely different from those in Ukraine. Their opinion was, and remains to this day, that North American churches are much more welcoming and friendlier than Ukrainian churches. I was left with the impression that churches in Ukraine are far more structured, traditional, and unfortunately foster unfriendly divides between generations. According to Valeriia and Viktoriia, older church-going Ukrainians are less willing to accept new ways of doing things and to interact with younger people.

After arriving in Edmonton, Viktoriia felt alone and wanted to bring her skills to the community and be a part of something big and special. She started looking for a venue where she could meet Canadians. Remembering what she had learned about Canadian churches from watching movies, she decided that attending a Canadian church might be the best idea. So, she went to the Anglican church in Edmonton, just two streets from her apartment building. This step was essential for her, as it not only helped her with her English but also made her a part of Canadian society. However, at the end of 2023, Viktoriia

wanted to explore the possibility of going to the United States. Why the US? Well, it is the TYPICAL American dream usually seen on North American TV shows. Dreaming of being a singer and hoping to tour around the world made her and her partner try to move to the US. Easier said than done. They packed up, said goodbye to Edmonton, and headed for the American border. After being at the border for a couple of hours, they were refused entry to the States. A subsequent adventure of traveling through various Canadian cities ended in Halifax.

Shortly after arriving in Halifax, Valeriia arrived. Viktoriia, her partner, and Valeriia began a new chapter in their lives in Halifax. Remembering Viktoriia's experience in Edmonton, the sisters decided to go and find a welcoming community, which they now call their family, in the beautiful city of Halifax. They drew a circle on a map and looked for a church inside the circle. As it was hard for them to get around, since they only had one shared car which was used by Viktoriia's partner to get to his job, the church had to be close. There were two nearby churches, Saint Peter's being one of them. Looking at their map and then at each other, they said, "Let's go!" They visited both. Saint Peter's was the first church, and it was Parish Administrator Donna Lynn who opened the door and first said, "Welcome to Saint Peter's." Not long after, Betty Dione, who was in the building, met them. While Viktoriia and Valeriia eventually left to check out church number two, the impression that Donna Lynn and Betty left on the women was too good to erase. The decision was easily made. Their new church would be Saint Peter's.



Viktoriia Singing on Christmas Eve

On their first Sunday at Saint Peter's, Viktoriia and Valeriia were overwhelmed with the friendliness of the parishioners. By the end of that day, Viktoriia exclaimed, "Everyone knew us. We were invited to sing in the choir." Only Viktoriia joined the choir, as Valeriia prefers supporting her sister rather than performing. After church, there was a luncheon in the hall – soup and sandwiches. That's when they met Darlene and Neil Boutilier. That meeting instantly solidified into a strong friendship which continues to this day. Valeriia and Viktoriia both have artistic talents which they have put to good use conducting numerous art workshops since arriving in Halifax. Valeriia designed the 75th anniversary icon we have been using this year in the lead-up to next year's 75th anniversary. OK, I now knew how both women made it to Canada and to St Peter's, but I had one more lingering thought. I reminded both women of their comments about the generational gap in Ukrainian churches. Most of our parishioners are older too I pointed out. "You're not the same!" was the response.

When Viktoriia performed a major role in a Ukrainian musical at the Bella Rose Theatre last year, a cohort of parishioners were in the audience cheering her on. (By the way, Valeriia did the makeup for the show.) Parishioners also attend the art workshops the women put on.



Viktoriia and Valeriia at the Bella Rose

In June of this year, Viktoriia and Valeriia went back home to Kiev. To get the least expensive flights and knowing that on their final leg they couldn't fly into Ukraine, their journey took them to Dublin, then Rome, and finally to Poland, where they entered Ukraine by train. To help them with their trip back home to visit their mother and other family and friends, Saint Peter's parishioners chipped in a few dollars - over \$2,000.

This is where it gets very ironic. We at Saint Peter's are just four months away from celebrating the parish's 75th anniversary. The theme for our anniversary year is "The Pilgrimage Continues." Well, when Valeriia and Viktoriia stepped off their plane in Rome, they found themselves in a city celebrating the Roman Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee year. The theme for that jubilee is "Pilgrims of Hope." So now we have two young women on a pilgrimage back to their home in Ukraine, having left a parish about to celebrate an anniversary with a pilgrimage theme, only to find themselves in Rome where they have become "pilgrims of hope." It shouldn't go unnoticed either that the principal church within the Vatican is St. Peter's.

Both Valeriia and Viktoriia wanted to bring something special back to their 'Birch Cove St. Peter's' and to the parishioners who mean so much to them. They spent some time exploring shops near the Vatican but then found the perfect gift in an often-overlooked basilica, even if it is the second largest in Rome – the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. The young women chose a beautiful chalice and paten set made by the religious Italian art brand VALENTI. Made of metal, likely silver-plated brass, the chalice and paten are elegantly crafted with deep symbolic meaning. I was thinking when I learned this, "What an appropriate gift for a church about to go on a pilgrimage itself."

The sisters made it to their home in Kiev and while there, they heard air raid sirens. Drones flew over their home. I asked if home had changed. The answer came quickly – "Not so much, but we had changed." The women's journey from Kiev to Poland, Denmark, and then Canada had necessitated them

developing skills and attitudes they had previously not tested. Valeriia found it much easier to interact with people. She was much more confident than when she left home.

This got me thinking. I wondered where “home” is for Valeriia and Viktoriia now, if only temporarily. I found my answer when a remark was made in reference to how the two sisters see Saint Peter’s – “You feel like you’re at home. You feel like you have family.”

As I drove home that night from our interview and reflected on their just-completed trip to Kiev, I found myself mouthing the words, “Welcome home, Viktoriia. Welcome home, Valeriia.”

Late August News from Saint Peter’s

Sept. 6- There will be a **service of new ministry**, instituting Rev. Tammy Hodge Orovec as the Regional Dean for the Chebucto Region on Sept. 6th at the Dingle (Sir Sanford Fleming Park) . The service, starting at 11 AM will be followed by a picnic. Parishioners from all parishes in the Chebucto Region are invited and encouraged to attend. Bring a lawn chair and join in the fun.

Sept. 13- It’s Saint Peter’s turn to supply casseroles for the **St. George Hot Meal programme**. Casseroles should be dropped off by the kitchen doors at St. Peter’s between 10 AM and 10:30. A sign up sheet is in the narthex.

Sept. 20- The **Men’s Fellowship Breakfast** will be held at Jim’s Family Restaurant in Rockingham starting at 8 AM.

Sept. 21 **Food Bank Awareness Sunday** is Sept. 21.

Sept. 21 – **Back to Church Sunday** – Invite friends, family, neighbours, even yourselves!

It’s that time of the year to make preserve- relishes, chutneys, jams, pickles. Saint Peter’s isn’t in a jam but it would like to be. This year at the Christmas Craft Fair, the church will have a preserve table. We could use a bottle or two of your favourite preserves. If you are in a pickle about what to do with your extra preserves please bring them to church. We’d relish the opportunity to sell them at the fair!

NEW Saint Peter’s email Address – office@stpetersbircove.org