

# DECEMBER 2025

# FAITH TIDES



Image by J. Abram Photography



Bishop's Column: Responding to the rising tide of homelessness in our communities

Order of the diocese investiture honours faithful service

Crafty St. Philip's parishioners make quilts for women in recovery

# Responding to the rising tide of homelessness in our communities



*The Woodlands at Dawson Heights, which offers independent below-market rentals. Image courtesy of Peter J. Parker.*

*By Anna Greenwood-Lee*

In Montreal in October, I had the privilege of participating in and being on a panel at the national conference of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Over 2,300 people participated in this conference and it was fascinating to see the breadth and depth of experience and knowledge among people working to turn the tide on homelessness in Canada.

## **Temporary shelters are not true love of neighbour**

Back in Calgary, in 2000, the church where I was

serving as curate participated in the Inn from the Cold program. Seeing a concerning rise in families experiencing homelessness, churches in the city created a program where we opened our halls and each evening families experiencing homelessness were bussed from a downtown location to whichever (usually suburban) church was offering shelter that evening.

The churches did their best to offer the families a warm meal and a few games and toys before watching these poor families try and put their children to sleep in cots in a church basement. Breakfast was served early, no one got enough sleep, and the buses took the families back downtown, where the older children went on to school.

It was relatively easy to get church volunteers to prepare dinner and breakfast for the families (we only took our turn in the rotation once or twice a month) but it was extremely difficult to find volunteers who would stay overnight with the families. I took my turn at this role, and it would take me days to fully recover from missing a night's sleep.

Fast forward to 2008 and I was serving on the board of the Calgary Homeless Foundation and chairing regular meetings of the direct service homeless agencies in Calgary. Nurses from the University of Calgary had done a study on the children and families who sought shelter in churches through the Inn from the Cold program and found that a significant number of them were suffering from PTSD. Not surprisingly having to move from church to church every night, not having privacy or stability, is not good for families and children and has lasting effects. Inn from the Cold stopped operating nightly shelters in churches and was able to get permanent shelter spaces for families in a

central location.

In hindsight, the incredible effort countless volunteers from a variety of churches put into finding cots and bedding, meals and toys, was not a good use of our time and energy. There was even talk of spending tens of thousands of dollars to add showers at the church I served. In hindsight, all that time and energy should have been used to advocate for a solution to family homelessness that put the needs of the families, not the resources of the church, first. We should have seen that what we could provide in church basements did not reflect our baptismal covenant. It did not respect people's dignity, it was not justice and it was not true love of neighbour.

### **We need a housing first approach to homelessness**

I tell you this story as it colors all my thinking when churches in this diocese wrestle with how we are called to respond to the rising tide of homelessness in our communities.

Unsheltered homelessness (those sleeping in places not intended for human habitation, i.e. on streets, in parks, in abandoned buildings, in vehicles and in other outdoor locations) has increased 300% in Canada since 2018. Unsheltered homelessness is distinguished from sheltered homelessness (those staying in temporary shelters) and what is termed hidden homelessness (those who are staying temporarily with friends or in a motel or in short-term rentals but who have no assurance of continued residency).

In 2008, when I was serving on the board of the Calgary Homeless Foundation, we adopted a housing first strategy and had the goal of ending homelessness in Calgary within 10 years. Ending homelessness

would look like no one being in the shelter system for more than two weeks before being moved to transitional or permanent housing.

Calgary did not entirely succeed in ending homelessness in 10 years. But I do think that their example of working across all levels of government and across all agencies in the homeless-serving system, and towards making sure that no one who is unhoused stays in a shelter for more than two weeks before transitional or permanent housing is offered, is reasonable and aligns with our baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

### **BC needs more non-market housing, and faster**

My concern in BC, and in the communities of this diocese, is that we are so very far away from this goal. I am heartened by the incredible work that the diocese is doing to add to the stock of affordable housing in our region. The recent opening of 85 units at Dawson Heights and the project in Duncan to add 110 units at St. John the Evangelist, as well as the good work of the other housing societies in our diocese, are projects we should all be proud of.

However, we need to realise that, [according to a report from Marie-Josée Houle](#), the non-partisan federal advocate for housing, at the current rate of building non-market housing that is affordable for very-low to low income Canadians, it will take at least 1000 years to end homelessness and housing needs in Canada.

Currently, only about 4% of housing in Canada is non-market housing. To solve homelessness in our country we need somewhere between 15% and 20% of our housing stock to be non-market. This should not come as a surprise. We know as a diocese how long it takes to

get affordable housing built. Finding the money, getting the property rezoned, getting development permits: it takes years and costs hundreds of thousands of dollars before shovels are even close to being in the ground.

It's also not surprising that 4% is not enough non-market housing. Think of all the people in your life and community for whom the goal of paying rent on or owning market rate housing is unattainable. For starters, anyone on any form of social assistance or disability support cannot afford market housing. In addition, many serving in the lower rungs of social services, education and healthcare cannot afford market housing. Clergy serving in this diocese have wages that mean that they qualify for (but usually cannot obtain, because of long wait lists and other barriers) below market housing in our region.

### **Housing is a human right, not a luxury**

In this issue of *Faith Tides*, [you will hear from Kelly Duncan](#), the incumbent at St. Andrew's in Sidney, about their efforts to help the unsheltered homeless in Sidney and how difficult that has been. Kelly and I have had several conversations about that community's refusal even to open a cold weather shelter. Both of us are clear that the real solution is not cold weather shelters but permanent homes.

Please watch for details of the 2026 John Albert Hall lecture series that the cathedral will host. We are going to bring together people from the homeless serving agencies across the diocese, as well as Irish theologian Siobhán Garrigan. It will be a good time to think about what next steps we are called to take to help our neighbours in this diocese who are experiencing homelessness.

At the conference in Montreal, Tim Richter, the founder, president and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, said that in Canada we treat housing similarly to way the US treats healthcare. It is a luxury for those who can afford it, instead of a human right guaranteed for all.

The right to housing was passed into law in Canada in 2019. But, as I said earlier, at the current rate of construction we are 1000 years away from having enough affordable housing. May we work together to create a world in which all children of God have a home where there can live in safety and dignity.

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## Nobody wants to sleep out in the cold



*Volunteers from St. Andrew's, Greater Victoria Acting Together and Homes for Living. Photo by Cheryl Applewhaite.*

*By Kelly Duncan*

“I don't want to sleep in the cold,” I confessed sheepishly to our team of volunteers as we discussed ways of keeping the idea of an extreme weather shelter

in Sidney front and centre in the community member's minds. Recently, a motion that would have seen a shelter open this winter was defeated.

Our church feeds members of the local underhoused population five days a week. It is a privilege and a joy to greet these 12-20 people by name, to walk alongside them, to share a meal and to listen if they want to share how they are doing. Having offered this ministry for several years now, our volunteers have helped complete forms to regain identification, advocated for eligibility for affordable housing, taken those we serve to medical appointments, filled prescriptions and offered a listening ear when needed. All involved in this ministry are honoured to do so.

During freezing rain, snow and other extreme weather events, "sleeping rough" — an already precarious existence — can become deadly. During previous winters, our volunteers have driven around to the parks, alcoves and other places people find to try to sleep, to collect sodden and frozen bedding, wash and dry it in their homes and bring it back for the following evening. Thinking that there has to be a better way and hearing of folks in other communities that have died as a result of exposure, our volunteers began asking Sidney town council to consider setting up an emergency weather shelter.

Initially, we were told that the town's extreme weather protocol didn't need to change. During a storm, the official protocol has town officials checking on those living outside and offering them a bus ticket to Victoria, presumably so that they can find a shelter in the city. Town council was motivated to reconsider this strategy after receiving a letter, sent to all the municipalities from the mayor of Victoria, citing already crowded shelters and asking each community

to take care of its own population.

Over the next few months, town staff identified all the criteria as well as funding options for the town council to consider. Eventually, a suitable location was found, run by Beacon Community Services, which would be staffing the shelter when needed. Volunteer coordination was another need identified and St. Andrew's stepped forward to offer our services. All that was needed was a change in zoning to allow for emergency occupation.

On the third and final reading, a petition against having the shelter at the proposed site with 400 names on it was presented. Concerned community members came out in droves to the council meeting to express their opposition. Many that spoke said that they were happy for Sidney to have an emergency weather shelter, but they did not agree with the proposed location. The council vote took place at the beginning of September this year. The result of the vote was four opposed and three in favour, defeating the motion and relegating our most vulnerable community members to sleeping in the freezing cold for another winter.

Having missed the deadline for funding from BC Housing, and having no other proposed locations available, town council has let this idea drop. This is why our team has partnered with Greater Victoria Action Together and Homes for Living to organize a "camp out" in the cold on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025. We've invited the mayor and town council to come and experience — for one night — what those we serve experience every night. We're doing this because, in response to my confession that I really didn't want to sleep outside, our church's volunteers replied, "No one does."

*On Dec. 1, 2025, a motion asking Sidney town council to reopen the conversation about suitable locations for an emergency weather shelter in Sidney passed unanimously. St. Andrew's is optimistic that Sidney will have an extreme weather shelter in 2026.*

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# Order of the diocese investiture honours faithful service



*Pictured (l-r) are Walter Stewart, parishioner on Salt Spring Island and a past recipient of the Order; Bonnie Claire Wadds, St. John the Baptist, Cobble Hill; Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee; and Ian Powell, secretary of the Order of the Diocese of BC.*

*Photo credit: J. Abram Photography.*

*By Naomi Racz*

On Saturday, Oct. 25, the investiture service for the Order of the Diocese of British Columbia was held at a packed Christ Church Cathedral.

This was the fourth investiture service since the Order was established by Bishop Logan in 2018 to honour

laity in the diocese who have shown faithful service over an extended period.

The Order has two ranks: member and officer. While the rank of member is awarded to those who have shown outstanding voluntary service to their parish, the rank of officer is awarded to those who show extraordinary commitment not only to their parish but also to the diocese or the Anglican Church of Canada, or both.

In addition to these ranks, the bishop can also recognize members, and the honorary member award is presented to those who are not Anglican but whose work within the geographic area of the diocese exemplifies the diocese's vision.

At this year's investiture, 42 individuals from across the diocese and islands were inducted into the Order of the Diocese of BC.

We also had the honour of welcoming Archbishop Shane Parker, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, to Christ Church Cathedral. Archbishop Shane delivered the sermon. He spoke about his connection to the islands and inlets; a connection forged in the 70s during a rainy and memorable hike along the West Coast Trail.

Archbishop Shane spoke on the second reading from the book of Luke (4:14-21), in which Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. You can watch the full sermon in the video below (from 37:40).

## The Order of the Diocese of BC Investiture, October 25, 2025

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=oujHwQPkn0A>



Following Archbishop Shane's sermon, the Order was presented to the following individuals:

### Members

- Bonnie Claire Wadds, St. John the Baptist, Cobble Hill
- Carole Ann Gill, St. John the Baptist, Duncan
- Patricia Lynne Sunderland, St. Michael & All Angels, Chemainus
- Valerie Davies, St. Mary's, Nanoose Bay
- Joanne Gloria Bevis, St. Paul's, Nanaimo
- Mary Eileen Curtis-Snider, St. Peter's, Quamichan
- Nicole Michelle McDaid, St. Philip's By-the-Sea, Lantzville
- Judith Nelson, Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria
- Debra Brown, St. Dunstan's, Gordon Head
- Margaret Smart, St. George the Martyr, Cadboro Bay
- Graeme William Brown, St. John the Divine, Victoria
- Barbara Ann Prescott, St. Luke's, Cedar Hill
- Anne Underhill, St. Mary the Virgin, Oak Bay
- Dorothy Robertson, St. Matthias, Victoria
- Sheila Simpson, Two Saints Ministry, Victoria
- Robert Willian Olmsted, St. Anne & St. Edmund, Parksville
- Kathy Coulthart-Dewey, St. John the Divine, Courtenay
- Craig Fraser Murray, St. John Gualbert, Port McNeill
- Richard de Candole, St. Mark's, Qualicum Beach
- Susanne Elizabeth Vickery, St. Peter's, Campbell River
- James Peacock, St. Peter's, Comox
- Alison Patricia Cowan, Trinity Anglican & Lutheran, Port Alberni
- Barbara Lynn Gossman, Church of the Advent, Colwood
- Barbara Lynn Fallan, Parish of Central Saanich

- Patricia Callendar, Parish of Pender & Saturna Islands
- Dolores Devindisch, Parish of Salt Spring Island
- Marjorie May Nelson, St. Andrew's, Sidney
- Garth Walmsley, St. Margaret of Scotland, Galiano Island
- Edward Bennington, St. Mary of the Incarnation, Metchosin
- Mary Jane Weeks, St. Mary Magdalene, Mayne Island
- Stanley Willow, St. Michael & All Angels, Royal Oak

### **Bishop's Members**

- Joanne Marie Beagle, St. Dunstan's, Gordon Head
- Amanda Louise Conrad, Two Saints Ministry, Victoria
- Geraldine Marea Hinton, Dawson Heights Housing Society
- Jeffery Searley Nelson, Christ Church Cathedral Building Ltd

### **Honorary Member**

- Cheryl Diebel, New Roads, Our Place Society

### **Officers**

- Ian David Alexander, Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria & Anglican Church of Canada
- Wendy Mae Carriere, St. Mark's, Qualicum
- Joel Thomas Hefty, St. John the Divine, Victoria
- Sharron Lynn Schumacher, Parish of Central Saanich
- Isabel Martha Weeks, Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria

### **Honorary Officer**

- Frances Hunt-Jinnouchi, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society

[Download the order of service](#) to learn more about individual recipients' contributions to the life of the diocese.

Frances Hunt-Jinnouchi was invited to speak. She is the executive director of the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH). The coalition works to provide culturally supportive, affordable housing and services, with the mission of ending homelessness among First Nations, Inuit and Metis on Vancouver Island.

Frances spoke about how, ten years ago, she was first asked to help the organization for a short period of time. During the initial meeting she found herself in tears. Frances shared how she lost her own mother to the streets of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and addiction, and eventually murder.

2028 will see the opening of ACEH's Wellness House, on land adjoining St. John the Divine, Victoria. Wellness House will provide culturally supportive housing for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people at risk of homelessness.

The final award to be presented was the Anglican Award of Merit. Archbishop Shane presented this award to Ian Alexander. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the life of the national church, both in Canada and internationally. Over the years, Ian has served in numerous roles, including Council of General Synod, and most recently as prolocutor. Archbishop Shane expressed his personal gratitude to Ian for his support during a time of crisis, when Ian stepped into the role of interim general secretary, just before Archbishop Shane's election to primate.

This was the fourth investiture service, since the order was established in 2018. The next investiture will take place in 2027 and Ian Powell, secretary of the order, is optimistic that there will be many more to come: "After this fourth time holding the service, with over a third more people being invested into the Order than in previous times and the attendance in the cathedral over 600, I know that the Order of the diocese now has deep roots in the life of the diocese."



# Crafty St. Philip's parishioners make quilts for women in recovery



*Pictured (l-r) are Heather Rendell, St Philip's parishioner; Ann Thomson, St. Philip's parishioner; Cheryl Diebel, director of New Roads, and Susan Dobson, St. Philip's parishioner; surrounded by the quilts made by the St. Philip's Angel Sewers and Crafters. Image courtesy of Susan Dobson.*

*By Naomi Racz*

St. Philip's Anglican Church in Cedar is home to the Angel Sewers and Crafters, a group of around eight parishioners who meet once a week to quilt, crochet, knit and sew.

The group started out in 2021, when St. Philip's parishioner Susan Dobson heard through Facebook about a group of women who were making quilts for Residential School Survivors. So, the Angel Sewers and Crafters started making quilts. They made six quilts in

total, which were hand delivered to Alert Bay by diocesan executive director Brendon Neilson.

In January this year, Brendon got in touch with the quilters again to let them know about a tour he had recently done of the New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community, a residential program for men and women with substance use disorders and who have experienced homelessness.

Five members of the Angel Sewers and Quilters — Susan Dobson, Heather Rendell, Ann Thomson, Daryth Patten and Lorretta Zink — got to work and were able to make 13 quilts for the women residents of New Roads. They prayed over each quilt and St Philip's incumbent Leslie Flynn blessed the blankets too. Susan hopes that when the women at the centre use the blankets, they will know that they were made with love and that God's love is in them too.

"I see people out on the street and my heart aches for them. I don't know how to help them. But I can do this. It passes on the love that I have felt through the years from God and from my church community," says Susan.

Susan and some of her fellow quilters were able to deliver the quilts to New Roads. They had the chance to meet Cheryl Diebel, the director of New Roads and a recent recipient of the Order of the Diocese of BC. The quilters took a tour of New Roads and met some of the women staying at the centre. The quilts will remain at New Roads and the Angels hope that they will be able to bless many people over the coming years.

Julian Daly is the CEO of Our Place Society, which operates New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community. Julian is also a parishioner at Christ

Church Cathedral in Victoria. He expressed his gratitude to the quilters of St. Philip's: "These quilts mean so much to the women's community. They are cherished not only for their warmth and comfort but also for the love and care that went into making them. Many of the women have rarely experienced such acts of kindness and generosity in their lives.

"The quilts provide more than just physical comfort; they offer emotional comfort as well. Knowing that there are strangers out there willing to dedicate their time to create something beautiful for them is truly touching."

The Angel Sewers and Crafters are taking a break from quilting for the rest of the year. They have recently been busy organizing and hosting a craft fair selling some of their creations at St. Philip's. The craft fair raised over \$2,000, which will go towards renovating the kitchen at St. Philip's. But they have plenty more fabric that they hope will go on to bless many more.

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## Lay leadership in worship course to run in spring 2026



*Image courtesy of Ascend Anglican photo bundle*

*By Ingrid Andersen*

Many of the parishes in the diocese are "in transition" and do not necessarily have a priest to celebrate the eucharist each Sunday. Additionally, parishes are rediscovering the daily office and considering ways to have lay-led weekday services. Lay-led services are an opportunity for renewal: to encourage lay people to live into the vows they made in their baptismal covenant, which reminds us that every one of us, lay or ordained, is called to participate in worship by virtue of our baptism.

**We are asked, "Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?" We answer, "I will, with**

## God's help.”

If your parish is often or occasionally without clergy and you are a lay leader who would be able and willing to lead in services, you are invited to apply online to be considered by the bishop for a nomination to attend the upcoming eight-week Lay Leadership in Worship course. Upon successful completion of the course, a conversation will be held about how and when you might help lead services of the word in your parish.

The Diocese of Islands and Inlets is presenting its fifth offering of the Lay Leadership in Worship course from early March to the end of May 2026. The course will provide the skills and resources for laity to lead worship services, morning and evening prayer and the liturgy of the word (a church service without the eucharist).

To date, more than 100 lay leaders have been successfully trained in the diocese, and almost all of those serve regularly as licensed lay ministers in parishes throughout the diocese. Regardless of their knowledge and experience, all participants go on to deepen their understanding of liturgy and the offices, and gain confidence to become more effective leaders of worship.

### Course description

The eight sessions will equip lay leaders to:

- Understand the purpose of liturgy
- Follow the liturgical year and the lectionary, and examine their purpose in worship and liturgical formation

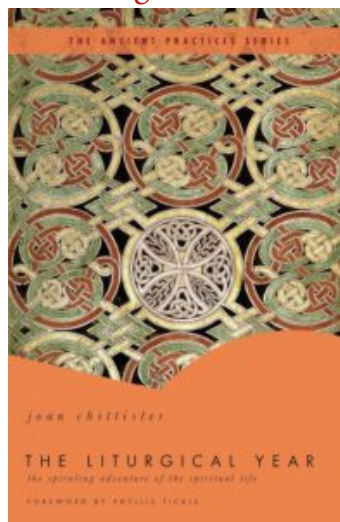
- Understand our Anglican, geographical, social and historical context
- Become familiar with the broad principles and structure of the offices in the BCP and the BAS, as well as the liturgy of the word
- Learn to plan worship collaboratively in your parish
- Access the available liturgical, lectionary, prayer and sermon resources needed to plan and lead a worship service
- Reflect on lessons learned from the practical implementation of course content

### Dates and location

- Via Zoom, on Thursdays from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.
- March 5, 12, 19 and 26; April 9, 16 and 23; and May 28
- Three mentored services during a month of mentored practical experience in your parish/region, followed by a final Zoom class on Thursday, May 28

### Required reading

#### [The Liturgical Year: the spiraling adventure of the](#)



[spiritual life](#) by Joan Chittister, Ancient Practices Series, 2009

#### Cost

Free; however participants must purchase (or borrow) their own copy of the required reading well in advance of the course.

## Qualifications

All those wishing to lead the liturgy of the word must provide proof of the following before applying for the course:

1. a valid Police Information Check (with Vulnerable Persons Sector check)
2. completed [Safe Church](#) training within the last five years
3. read the [diocesan policies](#) and sign the policy acknowledgement form
4. approval of your parish incumbent (or, in the absence of an incumbent, your warden or regional archdeacon) to lead the liturgy of the word in your parish

## How to apply

Those interested should [complete the online form](#). Applications will be accepted from Dec. 1, 2025 to Jan. 17, 2026.

In partnership with Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee, this course is brought to you by Ingrid Andersen, incumbent at Church of the Advent, Colwood, and other teachers and facilitators from throughout the diocese and beyond.

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# Ripples: December 2025

*By Faith Tides*

## Alert Bay at Sacred Circle 2025



*Janet Wasden at Sacred Circle, Aug. 2025. Photo by Yvon Gesinghaus.*

The 12th Sacred Circle took place Aug. 4-10, 2025, in Calgary, Alberta. There were six attendees from Alert Bay (‘Yalis), as well as Rev. Sheila Cook. Sheila shared the following photo and quote from Yvon Gesinghaus, ‘Yalis:

“At Sacred Circle, each time we gather, we plant a tree and we bring waters from our home villages from all across Canada, to pour on [the] tree as we first plant it. We asked Janet to pour the water in memory of her father Sam and her mother Pootsa. Thank you, Uncle Sam and Auntie Pootsa for all you have done for us.”

## St. Luke’s celebrates 165th anniversary

On Sunday, Oct. 19 (the day after the feast day of their patron saint, St. Luke) St. Luke’s parishioners and community partners celebrated the 165th anniversary of the parish of St. Luke. The first congregation at Cedar Hill met in the Irvine family farmhouse in September 1860.

Community members attending this 165th celebration included representatives from the Shelbourne

Community Kitchen, the Dawson Heights Housing Society, St. Luke's Players and South Island Counselling. Bishop Anna presided and preached at this special service. Oct. 19 was also St. Luke's Stewardship Sunday when they thank their many volunteers and ask parishioners to consider their pledges for 2026.

After  
the



*Image courtesy of St. Luke's Anglican Church.*

service, parishioners and friends enjoyed a catered lunch (from Fig Deli) and two birthday cakes, and took in a historical display showing St. Luke's through the years. It was a joyful celebration to mark St. Luke's 165th anniversary.

### **196 veterans honoured in St. Luke's cemetery**

St. Luke's held a service of remembrance on Nov. 9 to honour the 196 veterans buried or commemorated in St. Luke's cemetery. At the Fantastic Friday (messy, creative church for all ages held on the first Friday of the month) gathering on Nov. 7, children and adults made poppy banners to hang in the church and assembled remembrance pots to put on the veterans' graves.



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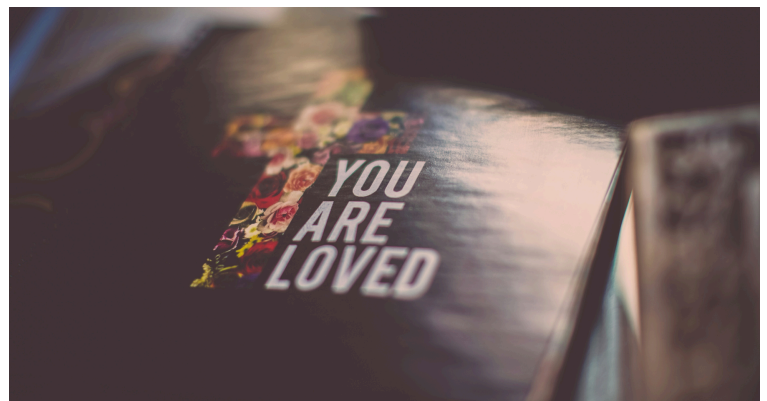
*Image courtesy of St Luke's Anglican Church.*

rosemary, a Canadian flag and a poppy cross to the pots. Partway through the service of remembrance, attendees moved from inside the church to the cemetery where they recognized the 196 veterans resting in St. Luke's cemetery by reading their names and placing remembrance pots on their graves.

The weather for the service was bright and sunny and St. Luke's was grateful to be able to recognize their veterans in this way.

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# Love must come before believing



*Photo by [Rod Long](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

*By John J. Thatamanil*

In a recent conversation with a young first-time attendee at church, I attempted to establish common ground for a vital conversation by referring to the parable of the prodigal son, surely one of the best-known Bible stories: “Remember how Jesus tells the story of the young man who squandered his inheritance on prostitutes and lived with the pigs.”

I went no further. My listener looked at me with utter incomprehension and responded, “What are you talking about?!”

My listener must have been thinking, “Why in the world is this priest talking to me about prostitutes and pigs?!” Miraculously, she didn’t walk out. It was an eye-opening moment for me, a welcome to the complexities of pastoring in the Pacific Northwest.

The majority of my congregation is well over fifty. They are part of generations raised in the church and have a high level of biblical literacy. So, I can begin my sermon by assuming that there is no need to rehearse core Bible stories. Loud snoring would erupt if I tried to retell that parable as I would to a first-time attendee. Still, huge chasms exist between who sits in the pews, not just in matters of relative levels of biblical literacy. The congregation includes PhDs in theology, as well as unchurched individuals. It includes homeowners and those who are unhoused. It’s an absolute wonder that any sermon works and most conversations don’t go off the rails.

Why tell this tale? Not to elicit sympathy for preachers, although I am confident that my priestly peers would welcome it. My goal instead is to highlight and urge us all to the work of community building through empathy and care. Most civic associations are founded on commonalities, such as hobbies, passions,

graduation from the same university or a commitment to a particular political cause. Increasingly, few churches can presume that their parishioners share a common class, secure housing, access to healthcare or a shared fund of biblical narratives. This is certainly the case at St. John the Divine in Victoria where I serve as priest associate.

About the only thing we have in common is a desire to belong, to be in community together rather than alone in isolation on Sunday morning. And that is what makes church special; we come together across radical difference, drawn together only by a desire to follow the man from Galilee down the roads he would lead us.

Under such conditions, church work must begin with the basics. We must learn to be human together in an age of isolation, loneliness and political polarization. The basics matter: listening, befriending, immersing oneself in experiences far removed from one’s own, serving together and expanding capacities for empathy. Belonging and behaving must precede believing, loving before deep learning.

As a priest and theologian, my commitment is that our way of being community must be shaped by the life, witness, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ-shaped character is what makes us distinctive from, say, a bowling league. However, I can no longer presume that everyone in the congregation knows who he is, if even his most famous teachings are no longer well known. Elementary education, including basic Bible study, will be necessary.

But what must be primary is the labor of building a community that embodies the love of the prodigal Father, who loves extravagantly, wastefully, and

embraces all regardless of sanctity or Biblical literacy. Building a community of love where all feel they are welcomed and loved prodigally because they possess infinite dignity — that must come first and, of course, last. Belonging and behaving — the tender work of love — must precede and set the groundwork for the work of believing.

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# Anglican Foundation resource helps parishes get the conversation on legacy giving started



*By Michelle Hauser*

As vestry season unfolds, many parish councils and stewardship committees are taking stock of the year behind them and planning faithfully for what lies ahead. For some, this is the moment when a familiar refrain is heard: “We should really do more about legacy giving.”

It’s an area of stewardship many churches aspire to strengthen but rarely find the right moment, or the right tools, to begin. Resources from secular charities don’t always translate to a faith-based context, and conversations about wills and bequests can feel awkward or out of place in parish life.

“We often hear from parishes that they want to start the conversation about legacy giving, but they’re not sure how,” says Michelle Hauser, development and communications officer for the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC). “That’s exactly why we created the Legacy Talk Parish Toolkit: to make it easier, more natural and more spiritually grounded.”

Rather than focusing on fundraising, Legacy Talk connects legacy giving to gratitude, discipleship and hope for the future of the church. Each seasonal toolkit aligns with the rhythms of the liturgical year, offering clergy and lay leaders reflections, bulletin inserts, sample messages and practical templates that can be adapted to any parish setting.

The Vestry Season Toolkit provides a parish council checklist. The simple, concrete steps help normalize legacy giving as part of a parish’s ongoing stewardship practice.

“For many churches, the checklist is a great place to start,” says Hauser. “It helps parishes move from ‘we should do something’ to actually feeling confident

about making legacy giving part of their spiritual DNA.”

Editions for Lent, Easter–Pentecost, Ordinary Time, All Saints’ and Advent–Christmas offer reflections and resources to build a year-round rhythm of gratitude and generosity.

“Our hope,” says Hauser, “is that 2026 will be the year more church communities feel inspired to take that next faithful step — turning good intentions into lasting impact.”

To explore or download the full Legacy Talk series, visit [anglicanfoundation.org/legacytalk](http://anglicanfoundation.org/legacytalk).

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## Letter to the editor (December 2025)



*By Faith Tides*

Dear Editor,

In the October issue John Thatamanil wrote on “[Keeping company with love](#),” a very important task for

us all to attend to. But as I have thought about this, I have concluded that true love requires following a path to reach it. St. Paul spelt this out for us in Galatians 5:22-23: By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against such things.

It starts with self-control. Isn’t that so true as we think about our interactions with family members and those we encounter in our daily lives, particularly as we drive on our roads now! And what about gentleness or humility? In some ways how we order things in the church encourages the opposite. Just think about how clergy enter churches with differing vestments and in a prescribed order, while sometimes the laity have their own pews, which can reflect their history in the parish.

Along our journeys we will experience the call to goodness as we live by the rules or laws of wherever we live or of our denomination. This means we need to follow these laws or regulations and not do our best to avoid having to do so. Each day, too, we will be faced with the need for kindness. How will we respond to those who are short of food, clothing, etc. Particularly those in our congregations. Patience is again something we are faced with daily as we deal with our families and those we encounter through the day.

What are we doing to promote peace in our homes, at work and in Canada where we have built up barriers with other groups over centuries past? An area we are starting to work on is our relationship with First Nations folk. But this should involve much more than acknowledging that we meet on unceded territory. We are also to seek peace in our families and in our daily interactions with the people we meet.

Joy should be easy for us here on Vancouver Island as we see the beauty of the sea, the mountains and the forests. As Christians our chief joy should be the certainty that God has demonstrated love in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

This brings us finally to love. Surely true love calls for all we have been considering. If we consider the interactions with our closest family members, doesn't

love require self-control, gentleness, goodness, kindness, peace, patience, joy? Of course, not all interactions can be joyful, but even in our most difficult interactions self-control and patience, just to mention two, are surely needed.

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