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# FAITH TIDES



Photo: J. Abram Photography



Bishop's Column: "Come on bishop, let's dance!"

Building a safe haven for queer asylum seekers

Remembering the Sacred Journey ten years on

# April 2026 content

By Faith Tides

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# "Come on bishop, let's dance!"



*Bishop Anna dances with Cowichan Chief Cindy Daniels. Image by Brendon Neilson.*

*By Anna Greenwood-Lee*



Diocesan council is grateful to the parish of St. Peter, Quamichan for hosting most of our meetings in their lovely hall. Not only is it a lovely setting but meeting at St. Peter's means the folks from further north in our diocese are at least spared the Malahat.

At our March meeting, Brendon facilitated a conversation about [St. Peter's "Our Land Story,"](#) a report prepared by Jesse Robertson, a Christ Church Cathedral parishioner with a PhD in history from the University of Victoria. Brendon asked us what we were impressed by, but also what made us uncomfortable. Many of us were impressed to read that in 1867 an Anglican lay person who served as a catechist to the Hul'q'umi'num, William Henry Lomas, also vaccinated against smallpox as part of his ministry.

At the same time, we were all shocked to learn the very violent colonial history of the area. In 1856, James Douglas, the first governor of British Columbia, sent two naval vessels and over 400 men to the valley. So'mena (Somenos) Chief Tathlasut was accused of attacking a settler (many suggest it was provoked). He was captured and hung from an oak tree not far from St. Peter's.

It was with this history in mind that the Monday after our March diocesan council meeting, I attended a ground blessing service just a few kilometres from St. Peter's, again on unceded Cowichan lands, at St. John the Baptist, Duncan. Our parish there has sacrificially offered up a good portion of their property so that affordable housing can be built. Having met on the Sunday to say goodbye to their beloved hall, we gathered again on Monday with Cowichan Chief Cindy Daniels and about a dozen Cowichan Dancers to bless the land that the housing will be built upon.



*Pictured (l-r, front row) are Brendon Neilson, diocesan executive director; Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee; Cowichan Chief Cindy Daniels; Kaeley Wiseman, Wiser Projects; Christine Wright, executive director of Duncan Housing Society; and (far right) Norman Knowles, incumbent at St. John the Baptist, Duncan. Image courtesy of Anna Greenwood-Lee.*

To prepare for Monday's event, I read over [the land story for that property](#). In that report I learned how, in 1866, concerned about the increasing violence and dispossession they were experiencing, a number of Hul'q'umi'num chiefs travelled to Victoria to try and talk to James Douglas. When Douglas was not available the chiefs instead met with the first Bishop of this diocese, Bishop Hills. There is no record of what happened after that meeting but history suggests that Bishops Hills did not advocate for the Hul'q'umi'num.

Funding was cut for that hard-working lay catechist and by 1884 St. Peter's incumbent, David Holmes, expressed the difficulty of continuing Indigenous mission work singlehandedly. "No means have been furnished necessary to carry on the work. Stipend has been discontinued. Work among Europeans has taken the place of Sundry services." By 1885, Holmes's successor, H.B. Owens, reported: "All Indian work has been stopped."

As I watched the Cowichan dancers, most of whom were school-aged boys in wonderful regalia, and

listened to the drums and singing, I reflected on how many generations of young Cowichan were not able to dance, drum and sing and how the church was a part of that dispossession and harm. It was as these thoughts were going through my head that it was announced that the next dance was a friendship dance. Before I knew what was happening Chief Cindy came over to me, held out her hands and said, “Come on bishop, let’s dance.” There was nothing to do but give thanks for her grace and follow her lead.

I share this story because for me it is a story both of repentance and of reconciliation and resurrection. Our history is at once beautiful and broken and our future is and will be bright. But to get there we must take a good honest look at ourselves and our story, know when to get out of the way so that something new can be born among us and, above all, know when to accept the invitation to dance.

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## Building a safe haven for queer asylum seekers



Photo by [Alex Jackman](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Naomi Racz*

St. John the Divine in Victoria has a long history of social justice work. For 30 years the church had an active refugee sponsorship committee, but when Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada introduced new administrative requirements for refugee sponsorship in 2022, it became clear that the parish could no longer sustain this already difficult and costly work.

Many in the parish were saddened, and Duane Lecky, a long-time St. John’s parishioner, was among them. The last refugee that the church resettled was a gay man who fled persecution in The Gambia. He came to stay with Duane and his family when he first arrived in Victoria and through him, Duane got to know other gay and lesbian Gambians who had also fled their home country for neighbouring Senegal. Dakar, the capital city of Senegal, has a UN refugee agency office and is the first port of call for many seeking asylum.

These LGBTQ+ Gambians were living on the streets and the Gambian man staying with Duane persuaded Duane to help them. He set up a GoFundMe and was able to send them enough funds to rent an apartment. “It was tiny,” says Duane. “They had to sleep in shifts. But at least it was not the streets.”

The group ended up moving apartments several times as they were forced out whenever a neighbour found out they were gay. Eventually, a young gay Gambian named Emel joined their group and in 2019 Emel was able to settle in Victoria.

Emel wanted to extend the same lifeline to other LGBTQ+ asylum seekers that he had been offered. In



2023, he was able to realise this vision when he co-founded Rainbow Haven, with Duane as the organization's chair. Rainbow Haven is a volunteer-led organization that aims to provide food and shelter for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers while they make their way through the refugee process and await resettlement.

To do this, the organization hopes to bring on board partners, called Rainbow Haven locals, to establish and maintain Rainbow Haven safe houses for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in locations where one is needed.

The first partner to come on board as a Rainbow Haven local was Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria.

Through a process of discernment and searching, the cathedral found a contact in Kenya who could help them rent a property. "You always rent," says Duane. "Because you never know if the neighbours are going to turn against you and drive you out of the house." The cathedral "local" is now renting a property that houses a group of lesbians who were not safe in the refugee settlement.

One of the women at the safe house in Kenya that Brad Hallam, who manages communications for Rainbow Haven, interviewed spoke of being subjected to multiple sexual assaults, including "corrective" rape, in a refugee camp. She was later imprisoned for wounding someone in self-defense. A social worker was able to connect her to Rainbow Haven. She is now safely housed in the cathedral's Rainbow Haven safe house and feels a basic sense of safety and stability that will help her focus on her resettlement application.

"We're intervening on that really basic level of just trying to get people to safety and create a foundation to build from," says Brad. "In terms of having those basic needs met around food, shelter, safety, those are

foundational. And until those things are met, it's really difficult to give your energy to anything else.

"If you don't know where your next meal is coming from, if you don't know where you're sleeping that night... Until those things are resolved, it's hard to give your attention to meaningful relationships or starting the refugee application process."

In Kenya, LGBTQ+ asylum seekers are usually a little bit safer than they were in the country they were fleeing. But in the case of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender asylum seekers who travel to Senegal, this is not the case.

"The Gambians who leave The Gambia and go to Dakar are actually in more danger," says Duane. "On world rankings Senegal is lower on the list than The Gambia, but you can't be a refugee if you're still in your home country. And you can't hide from people if you're still in your home country. So, they flee to Dakar where the UN has its office, and then they have to stay there through the refugee process, which can take years."

Eventually Duane hopes to have 200 Rainbow Haven locals, with a Rainbow Haven central supporting the local partners.

While Duane says they are open to working with a range of different partners, he does see a natural convergence between the work that Rainbow Haven is doing and churches that have a focus on social justice work. Many have a history of doing refugee resettlement work and may even still have funds set aside for that work. Churches also have experience in fundraising and already have people and systems in place, such as experienced treasurers and the ability to issue tax receipts.

“About half our committee are churchgoers,” says Duane. “One of my attractions to St. John the Divine in the first place was its social justice work and manifesting Christian love. In clear ways, I guess that’s what [this work] is about. Putting faith into action is a phrase you hear a lot and that’s what St. John’s has always done. I’m proud to be carrying on that tradition.”

Parishes interested in supporting Rainbow Haven or becoming a Rainbow Haven local can contact the organization through its website, [rainbowhaven.org](http://rainbowhaven.org), or by email at [rainbowhavensoc@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowhavensoc@gmail.com). Individuals can also make a donation to Rainbow Haven through the website. Monthly donations are especially valuable, particularly for sustaining the safe house in Kenya.

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## Remembering the Sacred Journey ten years on



*Bishop Logan McMenemy (third from the left) during the Sacred Journey. Image courtesy of Logan McMenemy.*

*By Logan McMenemy*

Ten years ago, in March 2016, a pilgrimage began in Port McNeill as an act of penance for the sins of a colonial past that would culminate over 460 kilometers later, on the steps of Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria on Easter Sunday.

Ten years on, it is time to remember the First Nations communities visited and the relationships formed, the parishes who welcomed and fed us and gave us a place to rest, the volunteers who made the journey happen and those who walked with us and prayed that our feet would hold up. Among many, we especially remember the drivers Jeff, Wally, Doug and John, and Marcia who provided support along the way.

Ten years on, it is time to remember why the Sacred Journey was undertaken and to recognize that while the pilgrimage was an early step, the work is not done. These memories of the past are offered as a contribution to the efforts of the present.

Anglicans arrived on these islands and inlets as part of a colonial project. Our church was entangled with colonial power and participated in the Residential School system — one of the largest Residential Schools in Canada was in Alert Bay. This history continues to shape relationships, inflict wounds and point to obligations that cannot be ignored.

The goal of the Sacred Journey was to symbolically re-enter the land, but to do so differently. We sought first to recognize that we did not bring the Creator with us. The Creator was already here, present in the land, sea, sky and, most importantly, in the Peoples already here, known in their languages, worldviews, songs and ceremonies.



To acknowledge these truths, we set out to walk from Alert Bay to Victoria, stopping in each of the traditional territories we crossed. In each place, we sought to apologize for the church's role in Residential Schools, to ask permission to enter the territory and, where invited, to stay, listen and honour the people of that place by offering to journey with them toward reconciliation.

The responses from communities varied, as we expected they would. Some welcomed us, some were cautious, some were rightly skeptical. Each response was a gift, reminding us that reconciliation cannot be demanded or rushed, only received with humility, patience and respect.

This was never just a symbolic walk. It was a spiritual discipline, a public confession and a commitment to walk differently in the future, together where possible and always with honesty about the past. The Sacred Journey provided a starting point for efforts that continue under new leadership, as Anglicans move forward on the important path to reconciliation and hope, in recognition that the work is not yet done.

*Watch the short film One Step to learn more about the Sacred Journey.*



## Speaking our inner stories out loud



Photo by [Pavlo Semeniuk](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Lisa Alexander*

Last month I asked us to think about [the stories we tell ourselves](#). Now it's time to start taking some risks with this curiosity stuff. Let's turn our curiosity outwards and use it as a tool for creating deeper connections with one another. Buckle up — this one is challenging.

What might happen if we found our self in the grip of one of these stories and instead of keeping it to ourselves, we decided to be brave and build healthy relationships and speak our inner stories out loud? It might sound something like this:

“The story I am telling myself is that you didn’t respond to my text because you are angry at me.”

“The story I am telling myself is that you cancelled on me again because you no longer want to be friends.”

“When you made that comment, the story I was telling myself is that you were blaming me and thinking I was stupid.”

Did your stomach clench? Mine sure did. My knee jerk reaction is to equate that sort of vulnerability with neediness. Who in the world would make themselves that unprotected and show their inner workings in such an insecure way?

I am wrong, though. It takes wisdom and courage to take relational risks. In her book *Rising Strong*, Brené Brown advocates taking a chance and externalizing these stories. She talks about how, when these internal stories arise out of an interaction, we cycle between approaches of kind self-awareness (*I bet there is something else going on here*) and strategies that prioritize self-protection (*I can’t believe he said that. What a rude jerk!*).

With either of those approaches the story stays inside of us. In *Rising Strong*, Brené turns the phrase “the story I am telling myself” outward, using it as a tool to help us challenge our inner stories. This tool can build resilience and healthy relationships with our people and our community.

A couple of weeks ago, the lectionary gospel reading was John 4, the story of Jesus and the woman at the well where Jesus broke social, gender and racial barriers by speaking directly to a Samaritan woman and offering her “living water” (eternal salvation). I’ve always wondered what was going through the woman’s mind when she and Jesus were talking.

I find myself tensing when I hear this gospel passage. I imagine the story she is telling herself going something like this: *He’s only asking me for a drink so he can mock me. He’s asking for my husband because he’s heard the rumours and he’s actually calling me a loose woman.* Perhaps the conversation was moving fast enough that she didn’t get caught in the stories she might have been telling herself.

If the internal stories you are telling yourself are keeping you in a loop and you want to get out of your head and into a constructive conversation, try the following:

1. First, take a breath and remind yourself that you are the beloved of God. Find your internal kindness and courage;
2. Then say, “The story I am telling myself is…” and finish the phrase with a worry or fear. This might sound like: “The story I am telling myself is that you aren’t responding to my texts because you no longer want to be friends”;
3. Then, say nothing. Wait for the person to respond. Hopefully, a productive conversation ensues.

Big steps, little steps, stumbling steps, faltering steps — all can help us to live courageously into the fact that we are the beloved of God. The Kingdom of God is here and now, and genuine connections are worth the risk.



# God speaks in the stillness



*Photo Credit: J. Abram Photography*

*By Marion Edmondson*

“Be still, and know that I am God!” (Psalm 46:10)

In a world filled with constant noise, the presence of silence in the Anglican eucharist may feel unusual. Yet silence is not simply the absence of sound; it is an intentional and meaningful part of the liturgy. These moments of stillness allow the words and actions of the service to be felt more deeply in the hearts of the congregation and create space to listen for God.

One helpful way to understand liturgical silence is through music. In music, the downbeat gathers everything together and sets the rhythm for what follows. Just as important are the rests, the brief silences that allow the music to breathe. Without them, the music would become a continuous stream of sound with little shape or meaning. Silence in the Eucharist works in much the same way. It gives the liturgy room to breathe and allows worshippers to absorb what has

just taken place.

Throughout the eucharistic service, silence appears at important moments. Silence follows the readings and the sermon. Scripture is not simply information to be heard and quickly forgotten; it is the living Word meant to shape our lives. A brief pause, especially after the proclamation of the gospel, allows worshippers to listen inwardly for how the Spirit might be speaking.

During the prayers of the people, silence invites personal prayer within the shared prayer of the community. While the spoken intercessions name the needs of the church and the world, quiet pauses allow each person to bring before God the concerns of their own heart.

After the invitation to confession, a pause allows worshippers to reflect honestly on their lives before God. Rather than rushing into familiar words, the quiet moment encourages genuine self-examination and prepares the community to seek God’s mercy.

Silence also plays a meaningful role during the great thanksgiving. As the priest leads the congregation through this central prayer of the eucharist, brief pauses help the community attend more deeply to the mystery being celebrated. The prayer recounts God’s saving work in creation, redemption and the life of Christ. Moments of silence allow these words to resonate rather than rush past. They invite worshippers to enter the prayer, not only with their voices, but also with their hearts. Like a musical downbeat gathering the ensemble before the next phrase, these quiet moments help the congregation remain attentive to the sacred action unfolding at the altar.

Some of the most meaningful silence comes after

receiving communion. Having shared in the bread and wine, worshippers rest in God's presence with gratitude. Words are not always necessary in such moments; silence itself becomes a form of prayer.

For congregations accustomed to constant words and activity, silence can sometimes feel uncomfortable at first. Yet when embraced intentionally, it becomes a gift.

Like the rests in music and the gathering strength of a downbeat, silence gives shape and depth to the eucharist. Silence is a reminder that worship is not only about what we say to God; it is about making space to listen. In the quiet moments of the liturgy, the community learns again that God often speaks most clearly in the stillness.

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## Glass plate negatives survive the test of time

*By Justine Soles*



Glass plate negatives are one of the more fragile records we have in the archives. Those

who remember the days before smart phones and digital cameras will be familiar with waiting for rolls of negative film to be developed into prints.

Glass plate photography was invented in the 1850s and was common until the 1920s. The technology for developing photographs has evolved over the century, but the basic process is similar. An image is created by exposing light to a photosensitive emulsion that is coated on a glass plate. Positive images are then made by placing sensitized paper in direct contact with the negative plate.

If processed correctly, glass plates can have a very sharp, clear image. Despite being 100 years old, the resolution is even much higher than many modern digital cameras, which can produce pixelated images.

The glass plate seen here (above, left) is in great condition. It shows some of the workmen who built Christ Church Cathedral. Architect J.C.M. Keith is identified in front row centre, sixth from the left. Using modern technology, I can digitally invert the photograph to show the positive image (above, right).

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## Baseball and the 'how' of faith

*By Brendon Neilson*





*Brendon at a Blue Jays game with family. Image courtesy of Brendon Neilson.*

I have been a baseball fan for most of my life. I was seven when I first visited the SkyDome in Toronto. We were on vacation from our home in New Brunswick and the sheer wonder of stepping out of the back halls of the stadium to see the green turf, and the scale of the space is

etched in my mind. That year the Blue Jays won the World Series, and my heart was hooked on the silly game of 27 outs and 162 games every summer.

There are many things to love about baseball: the fact that it is a series of events piled up on each other to make a match; that even the best hitters in the game fail two-thirds of the time; or that because it is such a long season, the significance of any individual up or down is often small. It is a relaxing pastime that allows for leisure, inattentiveness and even the occasional nap.

The 2026 season has just begun, and it has had me reflecting on last season. The Blue Jays made an amazing run and came within an inch of winning the World Series. It was devastating, and yet the journey was so great.

After mourning the tragic extra inning loss, I have been reflecting a bit about the season they had, the consistency with which they played and how they

talked about each other. They were constant in their care for one another and in their process.

The messaging throughout the post-season interviews was steady in affirming the stability of their process and the trust they had in their daily routines and rhythms — and that if they kept those routines up, the outcomes would take care of themselves.

Without getting too much into the weeds of baseball strategy, over the last many years, there has been a strong emphasis on “true” outcomes: walks, strikeouts and home runs. Getting on base via walk, not striking out and hitting bombs (home runs) have been the received wisdom for achieving success. The Blue Jays quite intentionally were a team that affirmed the received wisdom, sure, but they also placed intentional value on putting the ball in play, and trusted that good things would happen — and they did. With consistency, they kept getting hits, and they kept winning. So, what of it, and why are we talking about this here? Well, I think there is a lesson in faithfulness for us here.

Roland Gregor Smith, the theologian, affirms that it is the how of faith that ought to be the focus of our energy: “Faith furnishes neither the knowledge of what to do, nor the power for doing it. Neither the ‘what’ nor the ‘whether’ of the works depends on faith, but the ‘how’ of the doing.” Faithfulness is often more concerned with how we do things rather than simply what we do. In the story of the widow (Mark 12:41-44) who gave more with a coin, than the rich did with their large gifts, it is the quality of how they gave that revealed their faith.

Like the Jays, who focused on their process, we should be reminded that our faith is not about the outcomes

we achieve but about the way we live; it is the how that sets us apart. We reject the notion that the fruit of faith will be health and wealth, but it will be the love, gentleness, joy and peace that are present in our communities and actions.

We can't control the outcomes of our lives, but if we are faithful in the mundane and prayerful in our

discernment, we can trust that through our participation in the Spirit, the outcomes will take care of themselves. And we can enjoy the ride of faith ever opening new moments and opportunities ahead of us.

Go the Jays!

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