

The Contact

Connecting With Your St. Paul's Family



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To Grace or Not to Grace

Reverend Vernon Foster

There are some theological questions that have been debated by Christians for centuries. Questions about the Trinity, salvation, the Eucharist and the nature of God.

And then there is the really important question: Should we say grace before Sunday Lunch?

This question has come up from time to time at St Paul's, and it takes me back to my childhood. I grew up in a blended family with five children. Both parents worked full-time, which meant that preparing meals was a whole family responsibility. We took turns cooking, and, for a while, we had an ingenious household rule: whoever said grace was privileged to clear the table.

I am sure the intention was good. It was, however, a theological disaster. The five of us teenagers quickly discovered that saying grace came with a rather serious spiritual cost: you had to clear the table. Consequently, we became curiously reluctant to volunteer for this particular act of devotion.

Continued on the following page...

To Grace or Not to Grace, continued...

There were endless negotiations about whose turn it was, accompanied by the usual teenage theological arguments: “I said it last time.” “No, you didn’t.” “Yes, I did.” “That was Tuesday.” “Well, Tuesday was my turn.”

Eventually, our parents realised that we were not exactly being formed in a spirit of enthusiastic gratitude. So, the household rule was changed. Instead of being rewarded with the privilege of clearing the table, the person who said grace would be free from chores.

Suddenly, grace became very popular.

Which brings me back to Sunday Lunch. We made an early decision not to say grace at our Sunday Lunch, because the meal is offered to everyone who comes. Everyone really does mean everyone. You don't need to be a Christian, belong to a church, share our beliefs, or even know quite what you believe to have a place at the table.

You simply come. Come because you are hungry. Come because you don't want to eat alone. Come for the conversation, the company, the welcome, or simply because it is Sunday and there is a place for you.

For those who want to give thanks, there is space to do that in whatever way is meaningful to them. And for those who don't, there is no expectation to do so.

I have come to think that there is something rather grace-filled about that. Grace, after all, is about gift. It is given without conditions and without requiring anything in return. So perhaps not saying grace can itself be an act of grace.



Rev. Vernon Foster (left) with Rev. Peter S. (right), Senior Chaplain from The Mission to Seafarers in Vancouver

We don't need to hide the fact that Sunday Lunch is a ministry of a Christian community. We can be grateful for the food, for those who prepare it, for those who serve it, and for everyone who gathers around the table. But we don't need to make our way of expressing that gratitude a condition of belonging.

And perhaps that is the best kind of grace: a table with room for everyone, a meal freely given, and nobody required to say the right words before they can take their place.

Come and join us. The table is already set.

— Vernon

The Warden's Corner

Joy A. B.

Life has been wild and crazy for your trusty senior churchwarden lately. Just the way I like it! My mother served as a churchwarden almost twenty years ago and when I tell her what I have been doing, she just shakes her head!

Life is all about fillable forms, online learning, connecting with our hard working parish and diocesan staff, problem solving, building relationships in the community and supporting our dear Rector. I truly enjoy my volunteer work as a churchwarden and consider it a great privilege to serve my St. Paul's family in this way. With Greg B. away for a few more weeks, myself, Lynda A. and Michele C. continue to fill in the gaps. Greg has lead responsibility for our building and grounds, and I have lead responsibility for our human resources. Our deputy churchwardens assist us. We kept things running smoothly while Rev Vernon was on leave.

Recently I successfully switched a couple of phone lines (elevator and security system) to a new provider at a reduced cost and changed our janitorial supplier to Bastion Janitorial, a local company, (again at a reduced cost), managed by the grandson of Audrey T.

With our move to Coastal Community Credit Union and online banking I support our bookkeeper Don Gillett with online approvals and sign far fewer cheques. We have finally joined the twenty-first century!

I continue to represent St. Paul's on the Community Impact Committee of the Chamber of Commerce. The committee is composed of a large number of non-profit organizations in Nanaimo and we learn a lot from one another. Relationships are so important.

I had the fun of coordinating St. Paul's and five other churches as we took turns staffing a booth at the Commercial Street Night Market over the summer. It was great to make connections with Brechin United, St. Andrew's Presbyterian, St. Philip, Cedar, the Unitarian Fellowship and Hope Lutheran.

My six year limit as a churchwarden "kicks in" at our Annual Vestry Meeting at the end of February. Then it will be time for me to rest and rejuvenate from the work of a churchwarden. Until then, I am ready for the next meeting with my briefcase, notes and spreadsheets (to quote Lynda)! And I am ready to answer any questions. There is a lot going on at our beloved parish and I am happy to provide any information I can. Thank you so much for your continuing support.

Guess Who!

Can you guess which photo belongs to which member of the St. Paul's staff, clergy, and wardens?

Your options are: Sólveig H., Gillian B., Rev. Vernon Foster, Rev. Brian E., Joy A. B., Lynda A., Michele C., Greg B.

(Answers on the next page)



Guess Who!



ANSWERS:

1. Lynda A.
2. Gillian B.
3. Rev. Vernon Foster
4. Greg B.
5. Michele C.
6. Rev. Brian E.
7. Solveig H.
8. Joy A. B.

From the Church Office

Sólveig H.

Do you ever wonder what keeps Sólveig busy when she's working away in her office, or why you see events and meetings taking place in our building at all hours of the day?

St. Paul's rents space to groups of all sizes for meetings, classes, concerts, and events!

As you may already know, St. Paul's is currently operating under a deficit. One of the ways that we bring in revenue is by offering space for members of our community to gather. Many of these groups are non-profit and community organizations, as well as local businesses and private groups. We see everything from birthday celebrations and office Christmas parties, art and cooking classes, support groups, community events, and concerts and rehearsals. We have three meeting rooms, a parish hall and attached commercial kitchen, and of course, our historic church sanctuary.

An excellent way to support St. Paul's is to spread the word – we are blessed with a beautiful building and facility and want more folks in Nanaimo to know about it. If someone you know is looking for a place to gather, tell them about St. Paul's!

For more information, or to book space, drop by Sólveig's office or send her an email at facilities@stpaulsnanaimo.ca

What a Prayer Shawl!



From the Organ Bench

Freeman D.



During over 60 years «sitting on organ benches, I've occasionally had pause to ponder what it's all about. During some rather long and sometimes onerous tenures I've occasionally wished «if only I could have a Sunday off...» and between tenures «what do I do with myself now...». The answers have been sometimes surprising. Three times I have found myself singing in choirs where my crow-like voice ought to have excluded me, but through either the kindness or the desperation of Choirmasters I found myself heaving away in the Bass section.

One particular O&CM who will not be named for obvious reasons, had such a tobacco addiction that he couldn't make it through a service without a few puffs. After several unexpectedly short sermons and the awkward silence where a hymn should have started I found myself sitting in the end of the Bass section beside the organ bench. Officially as Bass Lead, it was my job (with the Titular still smoking outside) to jump onto the bench and start the hymn. Alerted by the sound of the organ, he would slither in and onto the bench as I slid off, and finish the hymn with a grand flourish — none but the choir having the slightest clue.

My arrival at St.Paul's was pure serindipity when a friend phoned me and said: St.Paul's is looking for an O&CM and you should apply. Well, I did, only to be informed that position was filled «but do you play the organ?» And so I became, quite happily, «Only the Organist» — an entirely new experience.

And now the next chapter unfolds — retirement. Although I've occasionally threatened in jest «you'll have to carry me out on a stretcher», recent health challenges have sent some obvious signals.

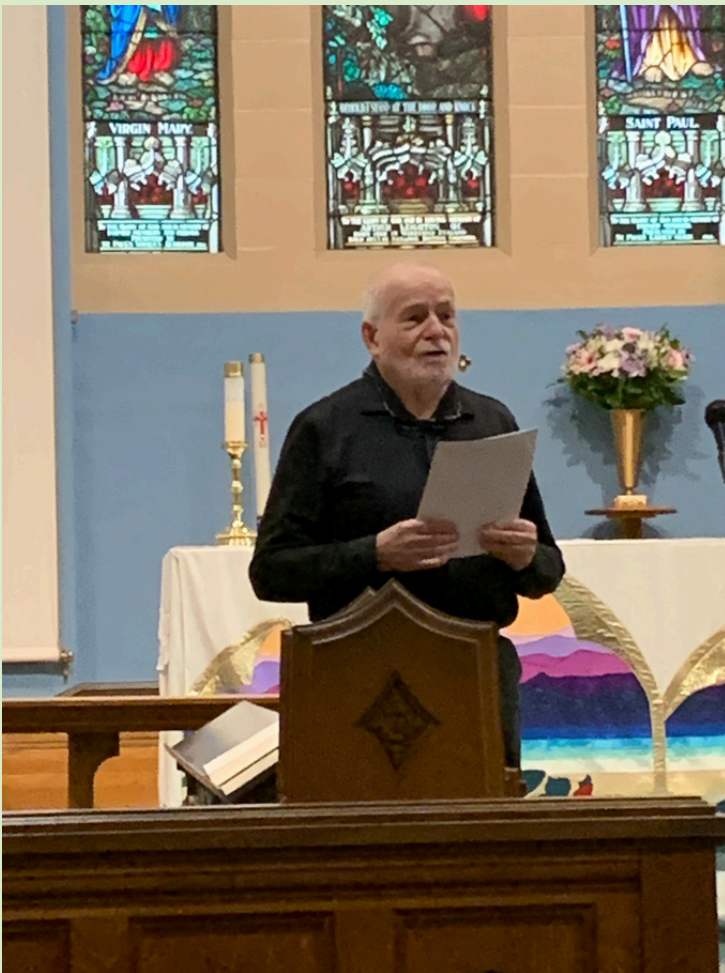
From the Organ Bench, continued...

Most fortunately, out of the blue, we received a request for practice time on BENJI from a gentleman recently arrived from Toronto and living only blocks from St. Paul's. Turns out that Peter Bishop had retired from some 30 years as O&CM at the Toronto Oratory and wanted to keep up his technique. Well, did we have a deal for him! So, through Advent and Christmas, Peter and I will share organist duties as I prepare for full retirement.

I've already enjoyed being an «ordinary parishioner» and Peter's fine organ playing while holding onto the security blanket that, at least occasionally I can sit on BENJI's bench and do what I love best.

Soli gloria deo!
Freeman

Wishing you the happiest retirement, Freeman!



St. Paul's Enters the 20th Century

In celebration of our 165th anniversary

Taken from Don Sale's History of St. Paul's (1986)

Edited by Sue G.



The first St. Paul's Church

It was decided that a new church was in order. On September 6, 1906 at 3 pm, the corner-stone of the second St. Paul's church was laid by the Bishop of British Columbia. In addition to various church memorabilia, an embedded capsule contained the names of 500 Nanaimo children. Mrs. Flora McGirr and Miss Mebius collected the names from local families, charging 10 cents per name for church building use.

The foundation cost \$760; the super-structure \$5,391; the tower & steeple \$1,050.00. The contract price for pews & chancel furnishings (not including the altar) was \$1,100. The organ was \$1,600.00. The Consecration Festival was held on April 11, 1907. The total subscriptions and donations amounted to \$9,495.00. Some very large donations had been received, including from

former rector Canon Cooper. By 1905, the CPR had acquired the E & N Railway from the Dunsmuirs. Regular passenger service to Vancouver had been started with daily departures by the steamships Joan and The City of Nanaimo. The link with Victoria was weakening in favour of the link with the mainland.

Under Canon Silva-White, several church organizations were formed and flourished. On January 24, 1910 the Women's Auxiliary was formed, and in 1911, the Altar Guild. The Rector had taken over as Choir Master. The Sunday School and the Boys' Brigade were vibrant.

Continued on next page...

St. Paul's Enters the 20th Century Continued...



January 1930

In 1912, a strike began in the coal mines of Nanaimo which paralyzed the whole industry until the outbreak of World War I. That same year, the sleek triple-screwed Princess Patricia ran two round trips to Vancouver each day, thus linking Nanaimo more solidly to the mainland.

White announced that he proposed to resign and exchange churches with the Reverend William Cockshott, rector of St. Peter's in Bishop's Wearmouth, Sunderland, England. Canon Silva-White had had a successful tenure. The new church had been built and the Ladies' Guild had paid off the mortgage. He had organized activities like badminton and square dancing in the church hall. He was respected and is fondly remembered even to this day.



The second St. Paul's Church

August 14, 1914 saw the outbreak of World War I. Strikes were forcibly settled. Nanaimo undertook an all-out war effort, and many parishioners enlisted. Church finances suffered. At a meeting on May 31, 1916, the church showed total liabilities of \$1927.13.

In December 1917, Reverend Cockshott was replaced as Rector by Canon Septimus Ryall. (His name referred to his being the 7th son.) Canon Ryall's first problem as Rector was money. Regular use of the envelope system was initiated.

A mine accident in September 1918 killed 16 miners, and influenza reached epidemic proportions in October and November.

Continued on the following page...

St. Paul's Enters the 20th Century Continued...



The steeple of St. Paul's ablaze - July 19, 1930



The one bright occurrence in the midst of the doom and gloom was the end of World War I on November 11, 1918. A huge victory rally was held in Dallas Square with churches of all denominations participating. All the choirs came together to lead the singing.

In 1920, the back taxes and organ debt were paid off. In November, St. Paul's Young People's Society formed. Meetings were intellectual, social, and educational! For a number of years, Canon Ryall was a tennis star. He and his wife entertained frequently in the well kept rectory.

Disaster struck on July 19, 1930, when fire wiped out the section of Nanaimo bounded by Front, Chapel, Church & Commercial Streets. Six blocks were destroyed, including the Church. Though damaged, the Rectory survived. The loss of church property was approximately \$30,000. Fortunately, insurance of \$20,000 was carried. Canon Henry V. Hitchcox who had replaced Canon Ryall in 1927, was optimistic that the parishioners would face the task of rebuilding.

An urgent appeal as made to the whole diocese that the work of St. Paul's was going on in houses, halls and theatres, but that the atmosphere was not conducive to proper worship. In Nanaimo, very few coal pits were working. Most miners were working only two or three days a week. The urge to rebuild on the hallowed site which had been in use for seventy years motivated the parishioners into action, even though their appeal fell on deaf ears elsewhere in the diocese. In 1930, there was no Anglican church in Nanaimo or Parksville.

A new city bylaw demanded that downtown buildings be fireproof. The parish had in mind a church "of simple and dignified character". Mr. J.C.M. Keith, architect of the recently completed Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria, was engaged.

Continued on next page...



The aftermath of the fire

His first set of plans proved to be far too expensive and was rejected. Finally, a contract of \$23,296 for the building of the church and hall was awarded to the local Turley Brothers.

Damage to the Rectory was soon repaired. Church services were held in the Rectory, the Bijou Theatre (on Commercial Street) and in the Capitol Theatre (where the Royal Bank now is) on Bastion Street. Churches of other denominations offered help, and gifts began to accumulate.

On Monday, August 24th 1931, the Bishop of London, laid the cornerstone. Several church dignitaries attended the service. Hymns included "The Church's One Foundation", "Christ is Our Cornerstone" and "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name". The first service was held in the new church on January 3, 1932. Later that year, Bishop Schofield consecrated St. Paul's, in addition to

confirming 34 candidates. To this day, the cloister and tower have not been added. Like the Phoenix, the third St. Paul's had risen from the ashes.

In 1932, the effects of the Depression persisted. The organist and choirmaster was released as an economy measure, and Mr. Harold Palmer gave his services as organist. Mr. J. Kneen kept the coal bin filled, and Turley Brothers kept supplied firewood. The Rector took a 10% cut in stipend. The next two years proved equally difficult as the Depression gripped Nanaimo. Turley Bothers received the contract for the Church Hall, which was opened on December 6, 1935.

Look for the next installment of St. Pauls' history in the next issue of the contact!

From the Stewardship Team

Joy A. B., Vernon F., Will H., Carol S.

Celebrating Abundance: A Table Prepared

There is something holy about a shared table. What began in the winter of 2024 as a simple response to need — a hot meal on a cold day — has become something much more.

Every Sunday at 12:30, people gather. Not just to eat, but to belong. Neighbours. Parishioners. Strangers who become familiar faces. Friendships are forming. Stories are being shared. A community is taking shape. Some who first came for a meal now stay for worship. Others come simply because they know they will be welcomed. And behind it all is a quiet abundance: Hands that cook. People who serve. Voices that greet. Hearts that care.

This is not just a program. It is the Gospel lived out — one plate at a time. Last year, over \$10,000 was given to support this ministry. But more than that, something even greater was shared: dignity, connection, and love. This is what abundance looks like. And there is always room for more— more hands, more hearts, more grace.

Celebrating Abundance: An Open Door

For over 25 years, the front door of St. Paul's has been more than an entrance. It has been a place of encounter. Twice a month, people come — some working hard and still struggling, some facing homelessness, some simply trying to get through the week. And what they find is not just assistance. They find recognition. Conversation. Care. A grocery card. A bus pass. A moment of dignity.

But something else happens, too. Names are learned. Stories are remembered. Relationships are formed. This is not charity at a distance. This is community, up close.

Sustained by the generosity of this parish — and partnerships within our wider community — this ministry shared over \$11,000 last year. But the deeper truth is this: What is given is never just money. It is presence. It is compassion. It is the assurance that no one is invisible. This is abundance — not because there is no need, but because love continues to meet it.

Celebrating Abundance: The Gift of This Community

Abundance is not only something we give. It is something we are. Look around, and you will see it: A community shaped by generosity and faith. A love of music that lifts our worship. A deep commitment to serving beyond ourselves. A welcome that makes space for everyone.

This past year, 36 people joined the St. Paul's family. Thirty-six new stories. Thirty-six new voices. Thirty-six new signs of life among us. This is how the Church grows—not just in numbers, but in depth, in spirit, in connection. In the heart of downtown Nanaimo, this place has become many things: A place of refuge. A place of belonging. A place of hope. A place where all are welcomed—just as they are. This is who we are. This is what God is doing here.

And the invitation is simple: Come. Belong. Participate. Give from the abundance you have received. Because together, we are part of something still unfolding.

From the Parish Library

Archdeacon Brian E.

How do you choose a book. Was it recommended by a friend? Is it the author? Was it the cover? Did the title intrigue you? Or from a certain theological perspective? Possibly you were just looking for a good novel?

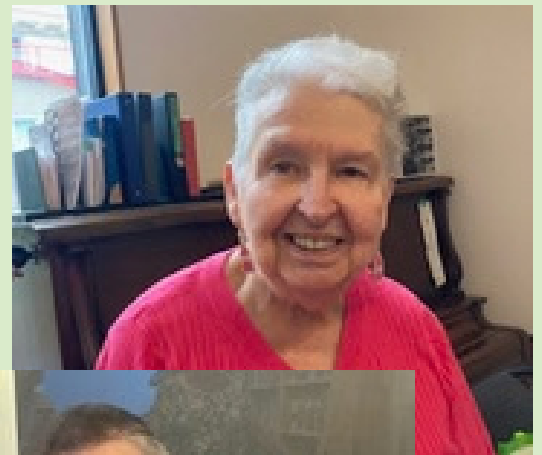
In 2017 Gerard Hughes published his book: *God of Surprises*. Quoting from his book, “Jesus said, ‘The kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field’. *God of Surprises* shows how we can find that treasure in the most unlikely of places – ourselves.”

Recently I have enjoyed the *God of Surprises* in my personal reading. While waiting to be received by Reverend Vernon I took time to look over the titles in the parish library. When I am reviewing the books in a library or book store, usually I am attracted by a title or the cover. On this day I was caught up with the following words: *Finding God In a Bag of Groceries*. The author is Laura Lapins Willis. I did not recognize the title or the author.

Richard Rohr wrote in his review: “This is incarnational religion, which you might call Christianity, at its simple and clear best! Readable and personal – but also profound!”

If you are looking for a good read? If you are feeling a call to outreach ministry? Or as Laura Willis writes; If you have a hunger for God, you may want to discover *Finding God in a Bag of Groceries*. I suggest this book is for you, the God of surprises is looking for you.

Meet the Altar Guild!



Threshold

Michele C.

A year ago, Threshold began after a few ideas, further conversations and vision enough to begin a time of gathering for a little different style of worship to God. Music was to take a larger part of a gentle coming together with a simple liturgy around it. Songs were chosen and a collection of willing musicians at various levels of experience volunteered to be a part of something new. No one knew how it would be received, or if there would be a second one. But, people came and enjoyed this contemplative and yet kind of eclectic offering. And so, Threshold was born.

It's hard to believe a full year has gone by and after a summer break, our Threshold service is back with fresh energy. Our September gathering had such a fun & lively finish as we sang, "We are marching in the light of God" in English and Isi Zulu, that I wondered if we were having a pentecostal moment! It was exhilarating! Threshold gatherings unfold loosely in our Anglican tradition of liturgy. The reading relays the theme, prayers are centred around this, a short reflection draws us into 'shared wondering' and music around it all is our expression in the heart of worship.

We continue to welcome musicians to come, see what we are about and bring their instruments. This season we have a new flute player joining us. Over the course of the year in the mix, we have had violins, piano, clarinet, flutes, cello, guitars, a banjo, djembe drums, percussive instruments and of course, the wonderful voices of everyone who attends in singing. You never know what you might encounter in the music choices from month to month. There will be a variety of songs, some from around the world where you may need to try singing a verse in another language at times or you might be part of a group singing a 'round'. Some songs quiet the heart, while others may make you want to get up and dance. In all we do, we worship with joy!

Our invitation to come on the second Sunday of each month at 4 pm for a little under an hour still stands. Come curious, come for peace, come and see.



From the Women's Group

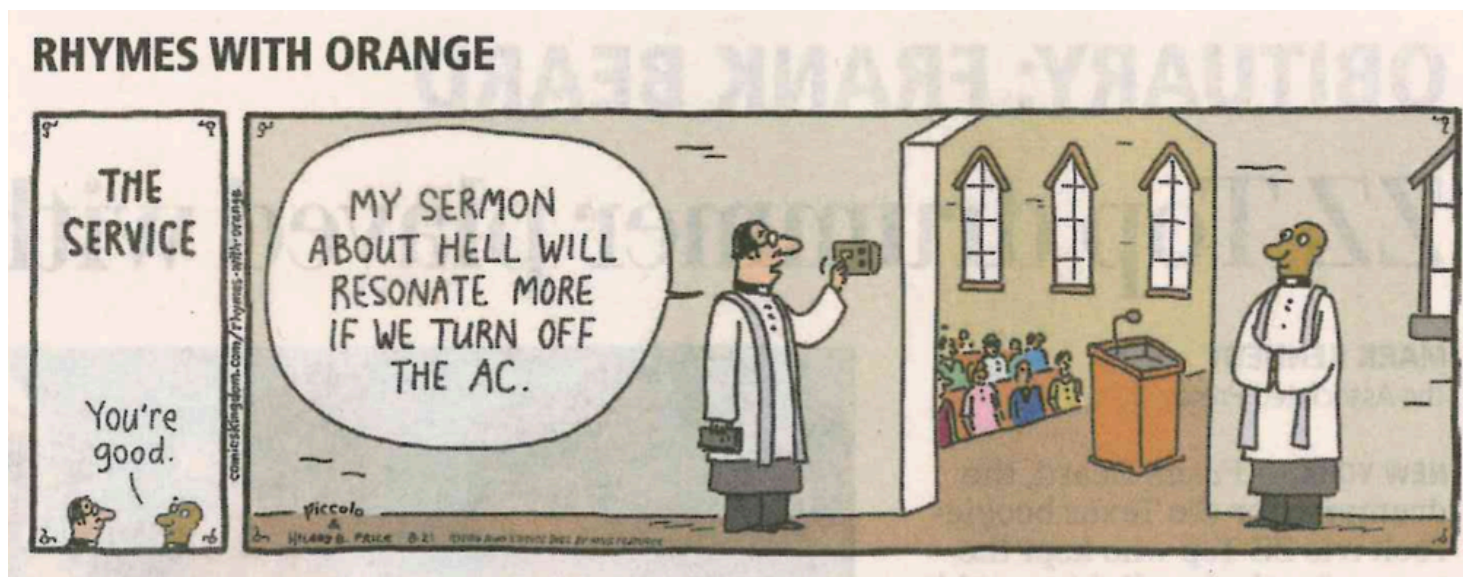
Marilyn B.

The St. Paul's Women's Group continues to help in any way they can with funeral receptions, church events, community lunches and preparing for the Marketplace. We had a summer break from meetings, but at our September 1st gathering we celebrated Elaine C-B.'s and Lynn A.'s 80th birthdays and welcomed two new members to our group: Melody and Sheila.

It is wonderful to have such a vibrant group of ladies. We will be meeting again on Tuesday November 3rd at noon for a bag lunch followed by our monthly meeting at 1 pm. Thanksgiving blessings to all!



For Your Amusement



Scenes from This Summer



A Pilgrimage Like No Other

Lyn M.



In 2014 Patrick Gray and Justin Skeesuck together traveled the complete Camino Frances from St Jean Pied de Port, to Santiago de Compostela. What made their journey unique is that Justin had no use of his legs. Patrick pushed Justin's wheelchair 500 miles across northern Spain. When Patrick asked his boss for time off work to make the trip, the boss readily agreed but on one condition: that it be filmed as "to not document it would be selfish and irresponsible. There's too much hope in this to not share it. The world needs to know hope like this exists." When the film was released into the world, thousands reached back and Accessible Camino was born, providing the opportunity for those of varying physical limitations to complete the Pilgrimage. This year (2026) was the final year of operation.

I was privileged to be selected as a member of this year's 115 km pilgrimage from Sarria (Spain) to Santiago de Compostela. We were a large group. 7 wheelchair users (Captains); 43 to push/pull/carry; 5 Spanish guides; and 3 film crew. Sadly, because the group was so large that even by the end of the week I still hadn't met everyone. We ranged in age from 17-81. No 16-bunk hostels for this group of pilgrims! We stayed in 5-Star hotels (they could accommodate a large group and they met our accessibility needs), and we ate in some very fine restaurants. We bonded instantly and trusted each other unreservedly immediately. The Captains decided how much assistance they wanted or needed in any given moment. That was most difficult when they said "hands off" at the top of hill, and we had to watch them careening down hill while praying they didn't crash (there were a couple of crashes, but nothing too serious). As the Captains were nearly all very athletic they propelled themselves much of the way while we trotted behind, ready to give a push when there was an incline.

A Pilgrimage Like No Other continued...

For steep hills we used straps: 1 person in the lead; 1 person on each side; 1 person pushing; and for really steep hills sometimes someone would push the pusher. Using this system, nobody had to work any harder than they otherwise would going uphill by themselves. Straps were also used to help us act as brakes if the hill was too steep for the Captain to safely fly down. While we “helpers” all signed up for a physical challenge, we all came with different gifts. I happen to have a certain kind of physical strength, so I was able to do a lot of pushing and pulling. Others had injuries and their role became to engage in conversation with the Captains, or to fetch snacks, or to share their body glitter just for fun! I have never experienced “community” so intensely.

I didn’t find the 115-km walk particularly tiring despite working as hard physically as I could much of the time. What I did find exhausting was being too open and so vulnerable with each other. After I returned home it took me several weeks to rebuild my protective shell, my boundaries. We had lots of fun together, dancing and singing and being playful. We shared many tears, occasionally of grief over lives so altered through disease or injury; but mostly our tears were of joy and of love. So often, many of us couldn’t speak without choking up. My perceptions of “disabled” and “accessible” were certainly rewritten. Many of us returned home re-evaluating our lives and our purpose.

We also were witness to a Miracle. One of our Captains developed a pressure sore so severe that it was going to require surgery. His wheelchair needed to be carried over every piece of rough ground, and because of the location of his sore he needed to be wheeled backwards, and slowly, down every slope. His accompanying therapist advised him repeatedly that he needed to quit his Camino, but he was adamant. On the night before the end of our journey, the pressure sore reduced by half. That should not have been medically possible. We witnessed the power of faith and of love and of prayer.





Upcoming at St. Paul's

Sunday November 1 at 10:30am - All Saints & All Souls Service

Wednesday November 11 - Remembrance Day, no midweek service

Saturday November 28 - Christmas Marketplace



Contact Us

Parish Office Hours: 9:30 am - 12:00 pm Monday-Friday

Phone Us: (250) 753-2523

Email: admin@stpaulsnanaimo.ca for general inquiries
facilities@stpaulsnanaimo.ca for room bookings

STAY IN TOUCH!



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REGULAR SERVICES

Morning Prayer

Mon-Fri at 8:30 am (online)

**Excluding stat holidays*

Wednesday Service

11:00 am Holy Communion

Followed by Bible Study

(in person only)

Sunday Services

8 am Holy Communion

(in person only)

10:30am Holy Eucharist
(in person & online)

Sunday services are followed
by fellowship &
12:30 pm Community Lunch
(by donation)