

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for October 25, 2026

"Stories from the Dead"

Almighty God, we have heard your words to us in holy scripture, and know your call to each of us. In every age you have spoken through the voices of prophets, pastors, and teachers. We give you thanks that over the years we have heard you speak to us through the preaching of your word in this place. Grant that those who preach in this place may proclaim the crucified and risen Christ and interpret your word with sensitivity and insight, that we may hear that word inwardly and respond to it in all our life. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, your living Word. Amen.

This last Sunday in October is often used by churches to celebrate the Feast of Dedication. Typically, this feast would be on the date of dedication or consecration of the church. St Peter's date of consecration is June 14, but as we didn't acknowledge our anniversary at that time, I thought that this was a perfect way to end our 160th anniversary celebrations from last night. For those who attended, you heard storytelling from various parishioners who are still with us, talking about the past, the present, and the future of the parish. This morning, acknowledging that our cemetery is older than the parish and is a very important piece of ministry here at St Peter's, we will hear stories from those who have died. I have done my best to honour the stories as best as I could with the information that I had.

Buried in our cemetery are people from various wars such as the Crimean War, the New Zealand War, both World Wars, and even the Riel Rebellion. For those who may not know, there's a very interesting war memorial outside the south door. It is a 10 on granite rock with a cross on top. The rock was found in April 1919 by Carlton Stone and Charles Palmer on Colonel Roome's property. It took most of April to move this rock along Maple Bay Road using sleigh, skids, blocks, cables, and 4 horses!

Charles Palmer was born in India. His mother died when he was 9 so he travelled with his father's military regiment in India. During the Siege of Lucknow in 1857, he was hiding in a room with his older sister and her 2 children, and his younger sister. He was 10 years old, and the only one to survive. Small boys were sent to grind wheat, but he hated it so much that he went off to be part of his brother-in-law's army troop as an ammunition carrier and messenger. For his efforts, Charles received the India Mutiny Medal and Clasp for the Defense of Lucknow. It's believed this medal has been buried with him in our cemetery.

During his adult life, Charles worked in the Public Works Department in India where he was renowned for his work as an Irrigation Officer during the drought of 1877 and the famine of 1895. He is credited with preventing the spread of cholera by insisting on the use of permanganate of potash in all wells. Charles eventually came to Vancouver Island and served on the North Cowichan Council and with the Cowichan Creamery. He died at 93 years old.

Carlton Stone was the first of many Stone family members to be part of the Duncan and St Peter's community. He was born in 1877 to parents who were farmers. He was 1 of 9 children and just shy of his 15th birthday, Carlton left his family and his Essex home to follow the sea aboard the barge *Hector*. Carlton spent about half a decade on various barges and freighters before deciding that he was ready to leave his life as a sailor behind him. In 1904, Carlton made his way to Canada seeking an opportunity for a better living, arriving in Duncan in 1909. Carlton began working in the sawmills, eventually founding the

Hillcrest Lumber Company, once employing 500 men and ranking 3rd among the Island's lumber producers.

Carlton was a deeply religious man and gave generously to St Peter's. He embraced the Christian life and encouraged others to do the same. He had 5 sons and a daughter who were also a big part of the parish life. The Good Shepherd stained-glass window was donated to the church in Carlton's memory, the 1966 organ was donated by the Stone family, and the grand piano that Ron beautifully plays was donated by Carlton's grandchildren, Mike and Barb. Carlton died in 1950 and his legacy is felt all throughout St Peter's history.

Of all the stories that I've been told about our cemetery, one that gets repeated to me often is "Bram Stoker's brother is buried here." Lt Col Richard Stoker was born in Dublin in 1851 and came to the Cowichan Valley at the end of the 19th century. The Stoker family was quite well-known with one brother a Dublin physician and another a London physician. And, of course, Bram, author of Dracula. Richard Stoker was also a doctor and entered the Indian Medical Service, retiring in 1900. He had active service in the Afghan War, the Sikkim Expedition, and the Chetral Relief Force. In his retirement years, Richard was an accomplished zoologist and botanist. His wife was an artist who donated paintings to the Royal BC Museum. The Stokers owned 25 acres of lake-front land near Marble Bay at Lake Cowichan, which was eventually donated to the University of Victoria. It is now the Jeanne S. Simpson Field Studies Resource Centre.

These were just three stories from people who decided to make St Peter's their final resting place. There are so many more stories out in the cemetery. Know that you are always welcome to wander the grounds, and please join us every other year for our Veteran Cemetery Tour.

May we always honour those who came before us and built St Peter's into what it is today.

Amen.