Diocese of New Westminster
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

November 20, 2026

To the People of the Diocese of New Westminster,

On November 30, 1976, nearly fifty years ago, a service of ordination took place on St. Andrew's Day at Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver. Three people were ordained priests, but it is very significant that two of them were women. In fact, two other ordination liturgies took place at corresponding times in different parts of the country, and four other women were ordained on the same day at essentially the same time.

In our Diocese of New Westminster, on that day Archbishop David Sommerville ordained the Rev'ds Elspeth Alley and Virginia Briant, along with the Rev. Michael Deck, fifty years ago. It was a wonderful and historic day in the life of our Diocese, and we continue to celebrate.

Women and men spoke out for many years prior to this, encouraging the Church to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and recognize the call and gifts of women down through the centuries. Urging the Church to see the ministry of faithful women: from those at the tomb, to the saints, to the mystics, and so many others. Women who have been evangelists, teachers, preachers, pastors and priests. And eventually the urging, protesting, and prayers of so many cleared the path to ordination of the first women to the priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada.

And there have been so many inspiring women deacons, priests, and bishops in our Church ever since. Women who have continued to encourage the Anglican Church to listen to the full voice of God and the full voice of all the people around us.

As we celebrate and give thanks for all women who have responded to a call in their lives, may the Holy Spirit continue to guide and direct our Church and continue to inspire and call women and others to bear witness to the gospel through ordained orders. May God bless us as each one of us lives into God's hope that we may indeed be salt and light in this world.

In Christ,



The Most Revd John R. Stephens
Archbishop
Diocese of New Westminster