

# DIOCESAN EPOST

Celebrating the Diocese of Islands and Inlets

A Section of the ANGLICAN JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2021

## Remembering MMIWG

BY ALASTAIR HUNTING

*Red dresses in Courtenay  
to honour Missing and  
Murdered Indigenous  
Women and Girls*

Earlier this summer, on June 16, our parish displayed red dresses on our church grounds at St. John the Divine and St. Andrew, Courtenay, to show our support and solidarity with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The reality of MMIWG hits close to home within our parish and for me and my spouse, Alison. Having lived and ministered on the North Island (Port Hardy, Quatsino, Port Alice and Fort Rupert), Alison became close to many people who were grieving the loss of a loved one whose life had been cut short.

During our time in the region, we were adopted into the Wamiss/Charlie family. Our Auntie Blanche and Uncle Clyde's daughter Cindy Scow was murdered in 2012 in her home village of Tsulquate, part of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. Cindy had just completed her early childhood education (ECE) training. She had a deep love for kids.

Before hosting the ceremony, I asked Auntie Blanche if we could honour Cindy and the other women and girls whose lives have been stolen by displaying red dresses at our churches. She gave us her

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*A red dress hanging from a tree outside St. Andrew, Courtenay. Photo by Marion Edmondson.*

## Letter from the Editor

BY NAOMI RACZ

After taking a break in July and August, the *Post* is back. In this issue, we hear from some of our churches about what they've been doing over the summer, including two churches working towards healing and reconciliation with their Indigenous neighbours. In July, St. John the Divine, Courtenay, held a ceremony to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. And over the summer, Christ Church, Alert Bay, took down its white picket fence and replaced it with raised beds to grow fruits and vegetables for

the community. This issue also features a remembrance of Mavis Gillie, a tireless activist on behalf of Indigenous rights and founding member of Aboriginal Neighbours, who passed away in March. Over the summer, in a similar spirit of strengthening relationships with our neighbours, Bishop Anna visited Victoria's Emanu-El synagogue and went on a walking tour through Victoria's Jewish history — which is long and rich, the synagogue having been established in 1863.

As well as our regular features — in this month's "Reflections" from Herb O'Driscoll, we travel to an Irish farm of the 1940s, and "My Journey" features

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# Our chief obstacle is what we have become



FROM THE BISHOP'S CHAIR

THE RIGHT REVEREND  
ANNA GREENWOOD-LEE

There is an old joke, “How many Anglicans does it take to change a lightbulb?”

“Change!? My grandmother donated that lightbulb!”

This joke illustrates the difference between “technical” and “adaptive” problems.

Technical problems can be anything from a leaking roof to landing a plane. Technical problems can be solved by applying existing knowledge and processes.

Adaptive problems are defined as problems that don't necessarily have a known solution or process, and the solution will require individuals to alter their ways.

You would think that changing a lightbulb is a “technical” problem, but as

the joke illustrates, sometimes in the church what seems like a technical problem can belie an adaptive challenge.

Human nature is such that we prefer technical challenges. We'd prefer the solution to be outside of ourselves and not require change or adaptation on our part.

Let's take climate change as an example. We'd all like climate change to be a technical problem with a technical solution. If there was a large vacuum that could suck all the carbon out of the atmosphere, that would be great! However, as I think we are all starting to understand, climate change is an adaptive problem. It is not going to be solved without each of us, individually and collectively, changing our ways.

Most of the church's challenges are adaptive challenges. Yes, every once in a while, there is a technical problem with a website that Catherine Pate can magically fix for us, but most of the time there is no simple solution, or there are many possible solutions with no clear choice. How do we better connect with our neighbourhoods? How do we proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

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## Bishop's Calendar

### September

- 2 Provincial House of Bishops
- 7-9 Leading Ordination Retreat, Bethlehem Centre
- 9 Induction of Alastair Hunting, St John the Divine, Courtenay
- 11 St. Peter, Comox, 130th Anniversary Celebrations
- 12 Presiding at Ordination of Deacons, Christ Church Cathedral
- 15 Cathedral Chapter Luncheon
- 16 Intercultural Development Index Clergy Debrief (Zoom)
- 17-19 Provincial Synod
- 19 Preach at Abbey Church, Victoria
- 21 CCCB Ltd. Director's Meeting (Zoom)
- 23 Diocesan Council, Church of the Advent, Colwood
- 26-30 House of Bishops, Niagara Falls, Ontario

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Pictures must be a resolution of 300 DPI and in sharp focus. Clearly and accurately identify the name of all subjects as well as the person who took the picture.

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## Remembering MMIWG

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blessing, and with the support of local Elders here in the Comox Valley (as well as Indigenous parishioners at St. John the Divine, Courtenay), we were able to share in a time together of sacred circle, joining our prayers, and love and resolve, with a deep commitment to standing with our sisters and seeing an end to MMIWG.

One of the Elders present reminded us that due to the church's role in colonization and residential schools, we have to work hard and stay committed to the path of justice, in order to stand up for Indigenous women and girls who, across Turtle Island, are so vulnerable to violence. At St. John, Courtenay, we are deeply committed to walking on this path with the help of Christ. ■

*Alastair Hunting is the incumbent in the parish of St. John the Divine, Courtenay.*



*Alastair Hunting (left) and Cary Davis (right). Photo by Marion Edmondson.*



*Pictured (from left to right) are Cary Davis, Kevin Lakis, Alastair Hunting and Corinna Grossman. Photo by Marion Edmondson.*

## Letter from the Editor

*Continued from cover*

Eric Stephanson, priest in charge at St. Christopher and St. Aidan, Lake Cowichan — we also meet two new columnists who will be making a regular contribution to the *Post*. As “diocesan theologian,” John Thatamanil will be reflecting on a range of issues, including climate and racial justice. Meanwhile, diocesan archivist Chance Dixon will be offering us a glimpse into the archives.

This issue also looks ahead to the coming months. Find out more about the upcoming 130th anniversary celebrations that will be taking place at St. Peter, Comox, in September. Diocesan vision animator, Brendon Neilson, also provides an update on a number of initiatives within the diocese, including a season of creation book study group.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue of the *Post*, and I look forward to bringing you more updates and opinions from across the diocese. ■

## Our chief obstacle is what we have become

*Continued from page 2*

Ron Heifetz, in his work and book on adaptive leadership, suggests three steps for dealing with adaptive challenges:

1. Observation — collectively step back from the immediate and look around to see what is happening. Get “on the balcony” and see the big picture.
2. Interpretation — work together to make sense of what you are seeing. Look for patterns and possible pathways.
3. Intervention — undertake small

customized experiments that focus on the human element of the challenge.

The challenge of how to be church in the turbulent 2020s is clearly an adaptive challenge. There is no instruction manual, there are no best practices, and there is no “solution” that is not going to involve all of us being open to change and adaptation. We need to take a realistic look at ourselves and our surroundings, look for patterns and pathways and then undertake small experiments that may or may not work. We’re going to have to get used to trying something new, learning, and then trying again. We might even need — *gasp*, to change our ways!

But of course, we are not alone in this work and we are not the first people in history to do this work. For our God is a God of transformation and of adaptation. Repentance, renewal, redemption, resurrection, these are all adaptive changes. God never gives us “technical” fixes but rather calls us to and works in us for transformative change. As children of God, as co-creators with God, we are always and everywhere called to ourselves to be changed, to ourselves be renewed and yes, ourselves to adapt.

*Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine!* ■

# It all begins with healing

BY WILLIAM HUBBARD

## *Taking down fences and building community*

“It all begins with healing, but we can heal ourselves,” Brian “Arnie” Wadhams indicated to me as we developed a plan to get rid of our fence in front of the rectory. We didn’t know it at the time, but much of our time together would be spent in contemplation of what it means for him to be First Nations. Our conversations also turned to the recent discovery of 215 children buried in Kamloops.

In Alert Bay, our community is roughly composed of an Indigenous band and a township where people integrate. At one time the Island was strictly “the white side” and the “Indian side.” Things have changed, and people have grown together as a community that cares for all. This does not mean that this is a utopian community. We simply struggle together.

Arnie is an Indigenous Elder who is trying his best to become more like his Elders. “I want to help. Once upon a time we helped everyone in the community. It fell on the Chiefs to establish order, and people all responded in providing food from out there.” He points to the sea, which is just a few feet from the rectory’s front porch.

“All the families lived in one big house. We lived off the land and the sea. We shared the resources according to need and we didn’t waste. I dream of those days and I experienced them when I was six years old.”

We sat on the rectory’s front lawn and we planned how we would replace the old white fence. I think the fence has come to represent the way in which the church has isolated itself behind the protection of its white pickets and the way in which people have slowly distanced themselves from the

Anglican church. Arnie had been helping me to mow the lawn. He just showed up one day with his orange riding mower. He mows the big spaces, and then I handle the edges with a push mower. Arnie has definitely helped the church look better so that we can be a part of a community that cares about its overall condition.

“We will build two twelve-foot boxes,” Arnie said. He then coordinated with the ‘Namgis First Nation resource manager, Tanis. In short order she provided wood, soil and plants. She advised us to plant strawberries and blueberries.

The week before we completed the boxes, Bishop Anna visited and shared some time with residential school survivors. One of the discoveries was how the children “starved.” This seems so terrible given that large gardens of potatoes and food surrounded the residential school. The children worked the fields, yet all they seemed to have was porridge. In the light of this discovery, how good it is to replace our fence line with berries and a big sign: “Help yourself.” Arnie and I both see the greater value of our dream to build boxes and boxes of fresh green food.

“Those nameless children that died, it really upset me. But now with our building, I see something different. It’s not about what was lost. It’s about doing



Brian “Arnie” Wadhams. Photo by William Hubbard.

something together. I like this...” In the heat we sweated and put our boxes together. Arnie brought some strawberries up to the rectory later. He handed them to me and said, “We work well together.” ■

William Hubbard is the priest in charge at Christ Church, Alert Bay.



Arnie next to the raised beds outside Christ Church, Alert Bay. Photo by William Hubbard.

# Mavis Gillie, 1927-2021

BY RUTH D'HOLLANDER AND  
MAUREEN APPLEWHAITE

## *An activist ahead of her time*

Mavis Gillie, a devoted Anglican and advocate for Indigenous Peoples, particularly in Canada's North and British Columbia, passed away in Victoria on March 28, 2021.

When Mavis returned to Victoria in the 1970s after having lived in the Northwest Territories for 10 years, she was fired up to correct the injustices she knew first-hand were experienced by the Dene people in the North. In 1968, as a young mother living in Fort Smith, N.W.T., she first ventured into activism by organizing the community to successfully save Axe Handle Hill from development. It is now a park.

In 1970, Mavis helped organize a five-day World Congress of Regional Ophthalmology in Yellowknife as eye problems were a major concern for children in the North. Along with her church, she supported the many children who were hospitalized away from home with eye problems.

Back in Victoria in the 1970s, as a founding member of the Victoria chapter of Project North, an ecumenical social action group working for justice for First Peoples in Canada, she assisted and supported the Dene and Inuit in their struggles against the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. She later assisted Indigenous Peoples in opposing logging in Haida Gwaii and the Stein River Valley and organized support for the Nisga'a Treaty, the first modern-day comprehensive treaty in British Columbia, finalized in 2000.

In 1979 and 1980, Mavis was involved in opposing the granting of a permit to

AMAX for the dumping of molybdenum mining tailings into Alice Arm near Kitsault. This included sending letters to the prime minister and flying to New York at the request of the Nisga'a Nation to address AMAX officials there.

In 1987, Mavis was instrumental in stopping a proposed marina's being built in Saanichton Bay, a major fishery for the Tsawout people. This was as important a battle as the ones for South Moresby, Meares Island and the Stein Valley. In 1988, she assisted in organizing the "Run for Justice" by Jack Thornburgh and Steve Underwood, which aimed to attract support for the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en and their rights and title court case. More recently, she supported the return of ancestral bones to the Tseycum First Nation from the American Museum of Natural History in New York.



*Mavis Gillie.*

Mavis was an originating member of and served 13 years on the Anglican Church's public and social responsibility unit formed in 1973.

At the 1996 Diocesan Synod, a motion was made that the 82nd Synod of the Diocese of B.C. "encourage the clergy and laity to develop effective means of keeping Church members informed on the Church's support and encouragement of aboriginal peoples, etc." After speaking to Bishop Jenks, Mavis was part of the small group that met to form Aboriginal Neighbours, under the auspices of the program committee of the Diocese at

that time. Aboriginal Neighbours, over many years, has helped in building bridges and making friends with First Nations neighbours.

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*Mavis did her homework and had a thorough knowledge of the issues she campaigned for. She was not intimidated by people in authority and was not shy in holding them to account.*

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As a 20-year-old, Mavis was chosen to represent Canada at the World Christian Youth Conference in Oslo, Norway. Perhaps it was this experience that led her to become the active, tireless campaigner she was. Her daughters remember her during their childhood being in the kitchen either talking on the telephone or tapping at her typewriter — often into the wee hours of the morning. Mavis did her homework both on paper and in person and had a thorough knowledge of the issues she campaigned for. She was not intimidated by people in authority and was not shy in holding them to account. Her remarkable drive really stood out and irritated some people (especially politicians). She wrote letters, made phone calls, visited with band members, organized and attended conferences, and presented at review panels, corporate boards and legislative committees. One example of Mavis's persistence in dealing with those in authority occurred in the 1980s when she entered then-Premier Bill Vander Zalm's office with a basket of daffodils and said, "Premier, I'm Mavis Gillie. I wanted to bring you some flowers, and by the way, we need to talk."

In 1992, long before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Mavis proposed two motions at the Triennial Assembly of the Canadian Council of Churches, one of which called on member churches to "re-examine the history of Canada from the perspectives of First

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# Jewish history tour strengthens bonds of affection with diocese

BY CATHERINE PATE

Our diocesan vision calls us to live into the Anglican Church of Canada's fourth "Mark of Mission," to "transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation." In our efforts to be what Roberta C. Bondi describes as "bearers of reconciliation," we have been seeking ways to build relationships of mutual trust and respect with those who have been harmed by the church, and to release ourselves from those prejudices that keep us from truly reflecting the image of Christ to our neighbours.

As noted in the June issue of the *Post*, in 2021-22 the diocese will engage in acknowledging racism, in ourselves and in our faith communities, and in learning together how we can remove the barriers that prevent our neighbours from living the full life God has intended for them. In the summer of 2021, for example, diocesan council, active clergy and synod staff took part in a cultural awareness assessment to better understand where they, as individuals, can better engage in this work. The collective results of this assessment can be found at [www.bc.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/reconciliation-beyond](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/reconciliation-beyond), and congregations across the diocese will be invited to participate in similar exercises in the coming months.

So, it was timely that Bishop Anna accepted an invitation in early July to visit Victoria's historic Emanu-El synagogue (shul) and took a walking tour through Victoria's Jewish history by way of downtown landmarks and the community's cemetery. Our tour guides were the Jewish Cemetery committee chairperson, Richard Kool, and the shul's "Discover the Past" tour guide and community historian, Amber Woods.



*Pictured (left to right) are Rick Kool, Amber Wood and Anna Greenwood-Lee. They stand beside the holocaust memorial at the Jewish Cemetery in Oaklands. Dedicated in 1860, it is the oldest non-Indigenous cemetery in continuous use in the province of British Columbia. Photo by Catherine Pate.*

As important as the tour itself were the spirit of friendship and desire to support and uphold each other's communities with which the invitation was both extended and received and that made the day so special. The tour invitation was extended after Bishop Anna, along with the shul's rabbi, Harry Brechner, and Masjid al-Iman's imam, Ismail Mohamed, participated in a spontaneous peace vigil at Victoria's Centennial Square on May 23 — a response to the escalating conflict taking place in Israel and Palestine at the time.

In a year in which hate crimes against people of colour and people of faith have dominated the headlines and impacted many of our personal lives, the offer to share a little-known part of B.C.'s history — a history marked by racism and resilience — was a poignant moment of hope and graciousness between the two Abrahamic relations.

The diocese and the conservative shul, through their bishops and rabbis, have had a long and blessed relationship.

In fact, Anglicans in this region were among the original financial contributors to the synagogue's construction over 150 years ago. In 1863 we celebrated, with the Jewish community, the establishment of this beautiful community hub, which is now the longest continually operating synagogue in Canada and a national historic site. Today, we are seeking new ways to support their continued prosperity on Vancouver Island and to learn more about our own tradition in the process. After all, it is in knowing and loving our neighbour that true reconciliation begins.

I encourage you to reach out to the Jewish community in your area to learn more. B.C. wouldn't be what it is today without them. That history, much like the story of the Hebrew people of the Old Testament, is our history too, and we are all richer for knowing it. ■

*"Discover the Past" tours can be arranged by emailing [congregationemanuelhistorian@gmail.com](mailto:congregationemanuelhistorian@gmail.com).*

*Catherine Pate is director of communications for the diocese.*

# Coming together for 130 years

BY TONY REYNOLDS

## *Celebrating a milestone anniversary at St. Peter, Comox, and launching a Blessings Boutique*

One hundred and thirty years ago, the world was a very different place. But people still needed to gather with their friends, build community, find refreshment for tired spirits and commune with their sense of the transcendent, with God.



(left) St. Peter, Comox, in 2021. Photo by Ian Oldacre. (right) St. Peter, Comox, in 1900.

So, William Robb, a settler farmer, donated land just north of his 262-acre farm to build such a place, provided construction began within 40 days and the cost was greater than \$2,000.

Thus, St. Peter's Anglican Church in Comox was established in 1891. Both conditions were met, with the final cost being \$2,228. And on the weekend of Sept. 11 and 12, the 130th anniversary of that event will take place, accompanied by a raft of interesting activities.

### **St. Peter, Comox, opens a Blessings Boutique**

Generosity has been abundant during the pandemic, but its focus has mostly been on providing for people's basic needs. Now that restrictions are lifting, generosity can again be expressed through the creative, the spontaneous and perhaps the whimsical.



It is this kind of generosity that St. Peter, Comox, wants to make available through a new Blessings Boutique. God told the prophet Isaiah to tell the people of Israel, "Come, buy, without money, without cost." As part of our 130th anniversary celebrations, we will be launching a new kind of store, where those who have surplus make it available to others without cost.

People have been simplifying their lives during the pandemic by eliminating what is unnecessary. The challenge is what to do with the things we want to get rid of. The Blessings Boutique will be open Saturday, Sept. 11 (10:30-4) and Sunday, Sept. 12 (11-1:30) at 218 Church Street, Comox.

Every item at the Blessings Boutique is free, but any cash donations made by those who choose to do so will be used to support the running costs of the initiative.

After the anniversary weekend, arrangements are being made to have the facility open on a weekly basis.

Those wishing to donate clothing, small household items, fabrics, jewelry, etc., may bring them to the church office (Tuesday-Thursday 9-1) or call the office at 250-941-5388 or email [admin@stpeterscomox.ca](mailto:admin@stpeterscomox.ca) to have them picked up. All items need to be clean and in good condition. ■

*Tony Reynolds is a parishioner at St. Peter, Comox.*

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Some of the items that will be available at the Blessings Boutique. Photo by Jim Peacock.

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PROUD TO  
BE CANADIAN

Hope Bear has a new sweater!  
Available for purchase on the AFC Store.

[anglicanfoundation.org/store](http://anglicanfoundation.org/store)

# Coming together for 130 years — event listings

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Below is a summary of the activities taking place over the weekend:

## Saturday, Sept. 11

10:30 a.m.

**Church opens** for reflections and prayer. Church gardens open for games for families and stalls showcasing the activities of the church's partner organizations, such as L'Arche, Comox Valley Youth and the Pregnancy Centre.

10:30 a.m. – noon

**Guided history walks** — This walk around the streets and lanes of Comox will bring daily activity over the last 130 years to life. The walk will end with a reception at the Comox Museum. The walks are by donation and an illustrated guidebook will be available for purchase. Places are limited to 14, and bookings can be made by phoning 250-339-2925 (Tuesday-Thursday 9-1) or emailing [admin@stpeterscomox.ca](mailto:admin@stpeterscomox.ca).

1:30 p.m.

**Bell ringing** — Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee will ring the church bells 130 times.

2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

**Guided history walks**

4:30 p.m.

**Celebration of Remembrance and Hope** — Music, video and spoken word will be used to convey the resiliency and courage of past generations while also acknowledging the tragedy of their indifference with respect to their Indigenous neighbours. Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee will be one of the speakers.

**Picnic** — A public picnic will follow in the church gardens; COVID-19 restrictions require people to bring food from home or order a Taphouse meal at a special price in advance via the church office.

## Sunday, Sept. 12

9:30 a.m.

**Communion service** — Followed by refreshments in the garden.

11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

**Guided history walks**

Noon

**Picnic** — Another public picnic in the church gardens; COVID-19 restrictions require people to bring food from home or order a Taphouse meal at a special price in advance via the church office.

*For up-to-date information on the weekend, please refer to [www.stpeterscomox.ca](http://www.stpeterscomox.ca) or St. Peter's Comox on Facebook.*



**St Michael and All Angels Anglican Church**  
*55th Annual Fall Sale*

**Saturday, September 18, 10am-1pm**

Produce, flowers, books, games, records, jewellery, collectibles, all types of household items, sports equipment, tools, small furniture, pictures, toys. A bit or a lot of everything!

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**DIOCESAN WOMEN'S  
FALL RETREAT HAS  
BEEN CANCELED.**

**PLAN TO JOIN US AT  
CAMP PRINGLE  
SPRING 2022.**



# Meet our new regular contributors

BY JOHN THATAMANIL AND CHANCE DIXON, WITH NAOMI RACZ

*Over the next few months, John Thatamanil will be contributing a regular column for the Post. As the new “Diocesan Theologian,” he will be writing about some of the pressing issues of the day, including racial and climate justice. Ahead of his first column in the next issue, find out more about John, his life and his work.*

John J. Thatamanil is associate professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary (Manhattan). He is the author of *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity* and *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament; An East-West Conversation*. His areas of research include theologies of religious diversity, comparative theology, and philosophical theology. He is a past president of the North American Paul Tillich Society and the first (and current) chair of the American Academy of Religion’s theological education committee. He has been a regular preacher since his teens and a lifelong lover of the church. He believes that we have zero chance of dealing with the critical issues of our age — the climate crisis, racism, wealth inequality, sexual and gender discrimination among others — without a committed church and that an activist church is unlikely to persist apart from contemplative practices that can sustain us in perilous times.

John was born in the South Indian state of Kerala to a deeply devout family. Both his grandfathers, though not clergy, were immersed in church activities. His paternal grandfather was an evangelist of the Mar Thoma Church, an Indian Christian church that traces its roots to the apostle Thomas (hence Thoma). His parents are deeply committed to prayer and social justice and transmitted these values to John and his sister, Rachel. John’s parents and later John and his sister emigrated to Brooklyn in the mid-1970s.

He traces his love for Indian religious traditions to his desire to learn more about what it means to be Indian as an immigrant kid growing up in the States.

John, being a good Indian kid, went to Washington University in St. Louis with the intention of majoring in computer science and electrical engineering. Much to his relief, he somehow ended up in an elective course called “Historical and Theological Introduction to the New Testament.” Bored out of his mind in engineering courses and delighted in his NT course, John bailed and switched to a religious studies and philosophy double major and has never looked back. He then did his MDiv at Boston University School of Theology and his PhD in comparative theology at BU’s graduate division of religious and theological studies.

John is married to Kate Newman, children and families coordinator at Christ Church Cathedral and religious educator at Christ Church Cathedral School. He is father to Moses Dryden and Kate Fulton-John. The “Two Kates Problem” is a source of regular hilarity at home.

*Chance Dixon is the new diocesan archivist, and she will be sharing facts and photos from the archives in upcoming issues. We hope these glimpses into the archives will illuminate the history of the diocese in the region and tell important stories about how we impacted those we encountered here.*

Chance has worked in archives and museums for over 15 years. She has both a diploma in cultural resource management and a master’s degree in archives and records management.

As an archivist, she has extensive experience managing archival collections and designing policy and programs that enable access and engage communities. She particularly enjoys creating archival programs and outreach that focus on involving and supporting community members, students and volunteers. Chance has been working on a variety of research and information requests — everything

from baptism certificate requests to researching family history and searching through property records.

This fall Chance will be creating a list of interesting volunteer projects that are flexible and support any changes in public health guidance. The archives reading room is also open by appointment for researchers every Monday 8:30-4:30. Please reach out to Chance for more information about the archives if you have questions! ■



*John Thatamanil, associate professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary in New York and intern at St. John the Divine, Victoria. Photo by Filip Wolak.*



*Chance Dixon, archivist.*

# Youth forum update

BY GRACE BODIE

On April 25, 2021, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee invited all the youth and youth leaders in the diocese to join her in a conversation via Zoom video conferencing. It was an opportunity for youth to connect with each other and with Bishop Anna and provided a platform for youth to voice their opinions within our diocese. During this meeting, the topic of the position of youth members on diocesan council was raised, and it was recommended that this position should be eliminated and replaced with a more effective way for youth to be involved in the diocese. At the May 29 synod, the

motion to remove the youth position on diocesan council was officially passed. However, youth can still be nominated to diocesan council in the same way as adult members.

Since the April conversation, Bishop Anna established what is being called a diocesan youth forum. The group is meeting online using a chat program called Discord. It has also been holding Zoom meetings to further discuss and organize the format of the forum. They are continuing to brainstorm and plan, but up until this point, it has been agreed that the youth will have meetings four times a year, two of which Bishop Anna will attend. Some of these meetings will be online on Zoom, to avoid the logistical problems of meeting in one place, and some will be in

person. They will be hosted by different parishes and will include fun activities such as BBQs, movie nights and games days. During these meetings, time will also be allotted for the youth to discuss any concerns, opinions and questions they may have as well as bring up any resolutions they wish to have considered by the diocesan council.

The perspective of youth is critical in this time of great change for the church. We are hopeful that the diocesan youth forum will make it possible for youth to take the lead in how they participate in the governance of the diocese, be inclusive of any youth that want to participate and create meaningful opportunities for youth and youth leaders to connect across the diocese. ■

# Mavis Gillie, 1927-2021

*Continued from page 5*

Nations, and to listen to their stories.”

In 1991, Mavis was awarded the Anglican Award of Merit for her years of dedicated service to the church and was, for many years, representative for the PWRDF (Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund). She received an Honorary Doctor of Laws at the

University of Victoria in 2016 for her determined and effective advocacy for Indigenous rights and reconciliation, particularly in Canada’s North and British Columbia. She was also awarded the Governor General’s Caring Canadian Award in recognition of her contributions to her community.

Mavis’s knowledge of the injustices suffered by First Peoples as the result of colonization, her passionate eloquence and her tireless persistence within the

Anglican and other churches to take action in support of Indigenous rights are greatly missed today. Aboriginal Neighbours is profoundly grateful for the decades of groundwork done by Mavis Gillie and others like her that will hopefully lead to a new awareness and commitment to change on the part of Canadians and their politicians. ■

*Ruth D’Hollander and Maureen Applewhaite, Aboriginal Neighbours, with assistance from Mavis’s daughter, Margaret.*

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# A time for harvesting



## Reflections

BY HERBERT O'DRISCOLL

*Donaguile, Castlecomer, 1940*

In the 1920s, the world of Irish farming was simple and modest. Some large estates were exceptions, but they were diminishing in number as the decade went by. Otherwise, very few farms had machinery. Seeding the fields and reaping the crops was still largely done by family. If asked, neighbours would come to help, just as my family would help them during these seasons. However, in the years after the First World War, many farmers began to purchase a mowing machine, among them my grandfather.

When we arrived in Donaguile for the long summer holiday in August 1940, my uncle told me that he and my grandfather and the hired man, John, hoped to cut the corn on the hill field near the farmhouse. I was twelve years old.

I am up with the sun to watch the preparations. Two horses are needed to pull the mower. They stand on either side of a long single wooden shaft to which my grandfather yokes them. Behind them is the mowing machine itself, very simply designed. Above two metal wheels and an axle is the seat for the driver. Beside it there is a slightly smaller metal seat for the reaper. On this particular day, my uncle will drive the horses and my grandfather will take a large wooden rake and climb onto the side seat. Beside him at ground level are the long, shining, well-oiled knives that will cut the corn, shuttling back

and forth with a loud, harsh clattering. Behind the knives is a wooden rack into which the falling corn will tumble, swept back by my grandfather's rake.

This morning I follow behind the mower with my aunt and the hired man, John. Their task is to take each armful of corn, tie it with binder twine and leave it lying for others who will follow to build the bundles into "stooks." Standing in stooks, the corn will then be ready to dry in the fervently hoped for summer sunlight.

There is a break for lunch. At some point during the meal, my uncle turns to my mother and says, pointing at me, "I think this young man could drive the horses this afternoon." I can't believe my ears. At first my excitement is full of fear, then it gradually simmers down to an excited anticipation.

The day continues to be fine as we return to the field. John has completed watering the horses. My grandad takes his place beside me with his rake. He shows me how to hold the long reins and emphasizes how important it is that I keep the horses walking in a straight line along the edge of the standing corn. As we set out on the first round of the field he keeps a close eye on me. Once or twice he signals to me to straighten up. At one point he grabs the reins from my right-hand and pulls them strongly to bring the right hand horse nearer to the corn.

By the third round of the field, I am confident enough to take my eyes off the horses now and then and to look about me. I notice a pattern in my grandad's directions. Each time we come to a corner of the field, he signals me to begin turning the horses before we get to the end of the field. This happens at all four corners. The result is that at each corner of the field, we

leave a triangle of uncut corn. When I ask why we are doing this, I receive the simple reply "Because it's in the Bible."

In the year of our Lord 1940, you did not say to your grandfather, "What do you mean, it's in the Bible?" You acknowledged the explanation and concentrated on driving the horses!

I intended to investigate further, but my uncle said to me that I had done a great job and I could perhaps do a bit of driving in another cornfield on the morrow. This so filled me with excitement that all else faded from my mind. A few days later I did ask my parents. Neither of them could enlighten me. Summer went by. We returned to the city.

It is 1990. Half a century has slipped away. I am in a window seat of an Air Canada flight from Toronto to Calgary and home. I look down to see a golden ocean of Saskatchewan corn far below. Suddenly, long ago horses are pulling on my tightly held reins, and I hear my granddad say, "It's in the Bible." I can hardly wait to get home to consult my Cruden's Concordance of the Bible. Hastily, I turn the pages to the list of Biblical references for the word "reap," tracing my finger down the miniscule print of the many references. Suddenly, there it is!

*"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor, and for the alien."*

Today we have much official language for such things. We write of Ethical Farming Policy, Responsible Agriculture, International Cooperatives. My grandfather was a ten-year-old boy in school when he learned that verse from Leviticus. It would have been 1871. ■

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# ROOT



# Coffee hour and spiritual growth



## My Journey

BY ERIC STEPHANSON

“Why doesn’t anyone at coffee hour talk about what was said in the sermon?” I remember wondering when I was about 13. Something about Jesus held my focus, yet going to church with my family was more of a source of frustration than connection.

As the second eldest in a family of seven children, I grew up in Edmonton, where my father taught agricultural engineering at the University of Alberta and my mom busily worked to coordinate our somewhat outrageous family life. I was active in many groups and activities yet struggled with an overanxious introspection and often stuttered.

As I look back almost 60 years to my teenage puzzlement, I see patterns of disconnection that have continuously provoked spiritual growth, alternating frustration and wonderment about what it means to belong to “the body of Christ.”

Like most kids, I eventually wandered from church, yet the fascination with Jesus persisted in my inner life. When I should have been in grade 12 in Alberta, I was a day student at a Benedictine monastery boys’ school in Trinidad, where our family spent a year while my dad filled in at a university there. After beginning at the University of Alberta, I studied at Bishop’s University and Université Laval.

Carol and I met in Quebec and were married (very young!) the following year.

She was from Michigan, and we spent years working back and forth across the country, growing together in ways that startled us both as we felt led together in a pattern of spiritual development. We worked as houseparents in a halfway house for men with developmental disabilities in Michigan, as live-in staff with runaway teenagers in Alberta, and in a multi-ethnic community development program at the High School of Montreal.

A significant turning point came with a spontaneous invitation from another young married couple, to join them in a small “prayer group.” (“What do you do in a prayer group?” we asked.) We startled ourselves by agreeing to join and then wondered what we were risking. However, the experience lit flashbulbs in me, as though we were living stories lifted from the book of Acts. The prayer group focused on deepening personal relationships centred around Jesus. We met in a small group where we not only prayed together, but shared our hearts and our faith over food, mutual support, laughter and often tears. “This is what church is supposed to be like!” I remember thinking. We had attended various churches but found them more like watching a production, compared to our small group discovery. Through a series of what seemed like minor miracles to us, I stumbled into a process of applying for a “trial year in theology,” which led to a decision to attend the Vancouver School of Theology for a year.

From my retrospective vantage point, I now see threads of purpose interwoven through the busy fabric of all those years, yet at any given moment I might have felt as much fog and struggle as fulfillment or satisfaction. I completed theological studies, serving one year as Anglican deacon, and discovered a wonderful “lift-off” as the liturgy moved from the pages of the prayer book to immediately accessible memory.

After graduating, I was ordained in my “background” United Church, and we went off to a French-English congregation in Val d’Or, in the far north of Quebec. I then became a university chaplain

working for the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches in Edmonton before coming to a large church in Victoria. Now that we had four children, our life became more demanding through congregational crises and family issues. Our spiritual experience reflected this, grew deeper, more nuanced, in many ways much more challenging rather than fulfilling.

I found myself drawn to define myself as “post-denominational” rather than identify with “left” or “right” theologically. I was “a centrist Christian” — which meant “centred on following Jesus” and accepting the resultant boundary crossing while feeling linked with people from many Christian and other backgrounds. After moving to Vancouver, I worked for many years as spiritual care leader at Canuck Place Children’s Hospice, helping families deal with the progressive illness and loss of a child. In the crucible of living with dying, I found strange fulfilment, the breakdown which leads, through paradox, to breakthrough, a resonance with resurrected life in death.

Now in the early phases of “the third third of life,” we found a lot we could afford in Lake Cowichan to fulfill my dream of building our own house. Living in a basement suite for 18 months during the work, we explored local churches in our small town and became regular participants in the Anglican congregation here. When the retired priest had to withdraw because of family illness, I was asked whether I might help offer some Sunday worship leadership since I lived in town, was ordained and was still breathing, and they had been without a resident priest for many years. At their initiative, I eventually met Bishop Logan McMenamie, who affirmed his willingness to appoint me on a very part-time basis.

As I look ahead, I see a continuing challenge for all of our churches beyond mere survival. While facing the decades-long pattern of decline we know too well, I am motivated by the “house church” experience we had so long ago. Following Jesus means we who follow will necessarily be thrown together with people of great

*Continued on page 13*

## Coffee hour and spiritual growth

*Continued from page 12*

diversity who are all drawn by Jesus, not by us! While denominational distinctions remain, many people care less about the brand name on the door than about connection, worship life that leads to spiritual growth and purposeful engagement that fits with their understanding of the larger narrative of God’s work in history. ■

*Eric Stephanson is priest in charge at St. Christopher and St. Aidan, Lake Cowichan.*

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A complete list of appointees  
will be published in the October  
issue of the *Diocesan Post*.

## Announcements for the fall

BY BRENDON NEILSON

### Vision implementation team

In the hope of being more unified and nimbler in our work of implementing our vision of being a renewed people with renewed hearts and renewed spirits, we have reorganized to have a single vision implementation team. This team is made up of lay and clergy leaders from across the diocese and will work with me to support and encourage our collective journey of renewal. The team will be meeting through the fall to determine priorities and will be reporting to Bishop Anna and diocesan council.

### Facing systemic racism

James Baldwin said that “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” The ways in which racism and white supremacy have been embedded in the systems and structures of our society are ubiquitous and intentionally hidden from plain view. The version of history that has been primarily told centres the perspectives of and primarily benefits white settlers and their heirs. We have begun an intentional process of facing our past so that we may faithfully encounter the challenges we face in the present. We have partnered with the Kaleidoscope Institute to go through a two-stage process to begin this work. First, we offered clergy, staff and diocesan council the chance to take the Intercultural Development Inventory to assess where on a continuum of cultural

competency we were. Second, we are in the initial stages of developing a series of dialogue sessions to engage with the *Challenging Racist “British Columbia”: 150 Years and Counting*. A small group of people have been recruited to give shape to these workshops, and a larger group of around 20 people will be trained as moderators to offer these dialogue workshops. Our hope is that as we engage in dialogue, new opportunities for faithfulness will emerge. We plan on having these workshops available for November.

### Season of creation book study

Season of creation (Sept. 1-Oct. 4) is here, and we invite you to a collaborative reading group on Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation*. Taking place on Zoom over four Wednesday evenings (Sept. 15, Sept. 22, Sept. 29 and Oct. 6), this reading group will be hosted by Bishop Anna and led by John Thatamanil, Matt Humphrey, Juli Mallet and me. This collaborative effort will help us encounter Dr. Moe-Lobeda’s work and draw us into a deeper understanding of the ecological crisis we face and its interconnections with racial and economic justice. Cynthia will be joining us in December as a part of the John Albert Hall lectures, and this book study will be a great preparation for her lecture. We recommend joining this reading group with a small group of folks from your community or parish to deepen your engagement. Check out the diocesan website for registration information.

Please reach out if you would like additional information on these initiatives. ■

*Brendon Neilson is vision animator for the Diocese of Islands and Inlets.*

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