

COMMITTEE REPORTS

RECONCILIATION

Our diocese has committed ourselves to the ongoing work of truth-telling, repentance, restitution, decolonization, and reconciliation. As an intentional focus of Bishop Logan's ministry and leadership in this area we have all grown to see the spiritual necessity to be a reconciled and a reconciling people in these Islands and Inlets. Like many parts of our vision this work is cyclical and not linear, it is a more a way of being than it is a task to be achieved.

Our efforts and successes have been numerous throughout the diocese over the last few years, and it is worth noting a few of these for you here.

THE PORT HARDY RECONCILIATION PROJECT

In recent years, the parish of St. Columba has recognized the importance of their relationship with the local Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw, Quatsino, and Kwagiulth First Nations communities. Seeking to form a more solid bond and begin works of reconciliation, the church entered into a partnership with the John Charlie Memorial Church which is located on the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Reserve. The Rev. Alastair Hunting, incumbent at St Columba (recently reappointed elsewhere), made regular visits to the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Reserve to perform pastoral care and visitations to the Elders, as well as Christian-based weddings, funerals, baptisms, house blessings. The Nation has begun to regularly invite members of the Anglican congregation to lunches, potlatches, feasts, and events at the local band school. As this relationship has blossomed, several programs have been created to continue this important work:

- I. Youth Ministry - In March of 2019, St. Columba began a monthly youth gathering called the "The Ark Youth Group." For the past 3 years, the church has been building relationships with Indigenous families and youth in the area, and as such, the youth expressed to the parish leadership that they wanted to meet more regularly. The group's average attendance has been between 8-15 youth, ages 10 to 15. They gather to make a meal together, have a time of sharing, prayer and singing, and then have some fun activities, games or crafts. The group went on a Winter Retreat and is also beginning to take a new leadership role in leading services at St. Columba.

- II. Indigenous Ministries Liaison – St. Columba employs an Indigenous Ministries Liaison from the local Indigenous community of Quatsino. She is an Elder and fluent speaker of Kwak’wala and Gut’sa. She has been helping to make the church more welcoming for First Nations folks in the community. She cooks a light lunch after Sunday services and has been helping the parish to bring more of the local language into the Sunday liturgy through pray and song. Most recently, she has become more involved in The Ark Youth Group.
- III. Pandemic Support – During the first few months of the pandemic, both the non-indigenous and Indigenous communities worked together to deliver food and supplies to isolated members of the indigenous communities.
- IV. Post-Pandemic Goals – The church hopes to establish a monthly “healing circle” that would bring Indigenous and non-indigenous folk together to explore Christianity and reconciliation in a context that is comfortable to all parties. This will hopefully begin once the pandemic has passed. The local Elders have suggested running these gatherings out of the Anglican parish of St. Columba to continue the work of creating further cohesion between the Christian and First Nations community members.

TRINITY TIME AND COMPANION JOURNEYING

At the parish of Holy Trinity, North Saanich, they hold a time when the parishioners break bread together with their First Nations neighbours from the Tseycum, Pauquachin, Tsawout, and Tsartlip bands. This time is set aside to host various activities, including workshops, talking circles, crafts, cooking, and lively and informative discussions and presentations. From the kitchen through to the car park, with children and adults, the ministry seeks to build community between two neighbouring communities. Trinity Time has been happening for 15 years and occurs two to three times a week, at various times of day, to accommodate a wide variety of working and retired folks.

The overall goal of Trinity Time has always been to “find common ground with the local bands through shared activities, thereby encouraging local band members to participate in parish events and parishioners to participate in band events.” In these pandemic-times, the goal has shifted to address this mission statement while also maintaining healthy social distancing and quarantine for those at-risk. The Trinity Time energies were re-directed to offer support to Elders who were homebound or families struggling while unemployed.

PARISH OF CENTRAL SAANICH

The Parish of Central Saanich is seeking to ‘Walk Well with Neighbors,’ specifically with First Nation, Inuit, and Metis Peoples. They have connected especially well in the past three years and worked together regionally in some of their initiatives, Companion Journey, educational events and more.

Lon, the incumbent of the parish just completed a Doctor of Ministry with a thesis of “Walking Well Together in Reconciliation.” It offers a somewhat transferable template for initiating this into the life of a parish. One of the early steps has been to form a parish “Reconciliation and Beyond Team.”



The team strives to view all that they do in the life of the parish through the lens of reconciliation. Parts of what they have in mind have begun and others are subject to COVID-19 protocol changes.

The focus will always be relational, partnering and educational. Acknowledging white privilege and other privileges is an essential component of truth-telling and a natural starting place.

In December 2020, the Tsartlip Peoples were granted property formerly known as “Woodwynn Farm” which is directly adjacent to St. Stephen Church land. The parish will look for good relations as they become physically closer neighbors. Chief Ron Sam speaks optimistically about reconciliation and the team looks forward to deepening our relationship with them and with the Tsawout Peoples.

INDIGENOUS COUNCIL

In response a motion at our last Synod in September 2018, an initiative to create a space for a regular gathering of Indigenous people in our diocese. The Indigenous council includes people from the three main nation groups of Vancouver Island (Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw) and other Indigenous people who live here and are a part of our diocese. Brendon Neilson as Vision Animator convenes the group and they are in the early stages of community building and determining priorities. Bishop Anna was introduced to the group in March 2021 and the group has been joined by Archbishop March MacDonald for a few of the meetings. They are currently working to select a representative to the Anglican Council of Indigenous People and are looking forward to reviewing the document that the ACIP is developing in this initial stage of the Self-Determining Indigenous Church in Canada. If you know of others who might be interested in this group, please reach out to Brendon for more information.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

These are just a few of the many initiatives and relationships that have been developed in the last number of years. We continue living into this important part of our vision in ways small and significant. At our last *We-Together* conference Pádraig Ó Tuama reminded us of an important lesson of conflict resolution that it takes as long as the duration of a conflict to assess how far we have come on reconciling. We have a long way to go until that time, but we can be encouraged by the work described above. We are committed to this ongoing work, and know we are early in this journey. At the Synod office we are working on some ways to help us to continue this important part of our ministry, and look forward to sharing those with you in the near future.

Submitted by:
Brendon Neilson
vision animator

