



Faith Tides

RENEWED HEARTS, RENEWED SPIRITS, RENEWED PEOPLE

November 2024

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‘God is indeed making all things new’: Bishop’s charge to synod



Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee delivers her charge to synod during the All Saints Synod opening worship on Nov. 1. Image copyright: J. Abram Photography

By Anna Greenwood-Lee

The following is the text Bishop Anna prepared for her charge to synod. To see the recording of the charge please go to [the recorded service](#).

“Behold, behold I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold, behold I make all things new,
my promise is true for I am Christ the way.”

— John Bell

The last time we gathered as a diocese as a synod, [my](#)

[charge to you](#) was that the future is not going to look like the past, and the future is bright.

I have been heartened by how the diocese took up that charge and repeated it back, and how we have lived into this promise.

Since our last synod, we have trained and licensed 54 lay worship ministers. All over our diocese, faced with the fact that we do not always have clergy available for every single Sunday and weekday worship service, we have dug into our ancient and new traditions, and trained up folks to lead beautifully crafted services of the word. As I travel across our diocese, I have been thrilled to see these folk leading services everywhere from here at the cathedral to Galiano Island, Port Alberni and Port Alice. Could anyone who is here today, who is a licensed lay worship leader please stand up and be recognised?

The future, the future is not going to look like the past and the future is bright. For behold, God is making all things new.

I have also been heartened by how many of our parishes are taking a faithful and considered look at their properties. Historian Jesse Robertson has done some remarkable work [researching the history of our properties](#), reminding us that many of them, such as this one, were granted to us by the Hudson’s Bay Company as part of the colonisation of this land. We have a responsibility to acknowledge and repent for our part in colonialization and to find tangible ways of reconciling and living in right relationship. There are conversations about rededicating part of this property as ləkʷəjən territory. Part of the St John the Divine property down the road here on Quadra Street is going to become a garden for an Indigenous healing centre

that is being built next door to that property.

God is indeed making all things new.

We are in the process of adding another 85 affordable housing units for seniors at Dawson Heights, our ministry across the road from St Luke's in Saanich. This brings the total number of affordable housing units at Dawson to 183. St John's, Duncan has sacrificially gifted much of its property to Duncan Housing Society so that 125 units of affordable housing can be built in downtown Duncan.

So many of our parishes are having honest, difficult, beautiful conversations about how best to steward our properties into the future. If your congregation is having such conversations, please stand.

Thank you for your faithfulness in this work. It is not simple. May you know that God is indeed at work in you, in the world, in the communities you serve, making all things new. For the home of God is among mortals and what we do with our places, with our church homes, with the lands we steward, matters to God.

Today, All Saints, our scriptures again remind us of the bright future that God is always and everywhere calling us into.

For me, the connecting thread between the first reading from the Wisdom of Solomon, the second from Revelation and the gospel, is tears. In all three readings there are tears. In the Wisdom of Solomon, we are exhorted not to cry for the departed but to trust that they are at peace, or, in fact, that they are running like sparks though stubble, that the flames of their lives are spreading, like wildfire.

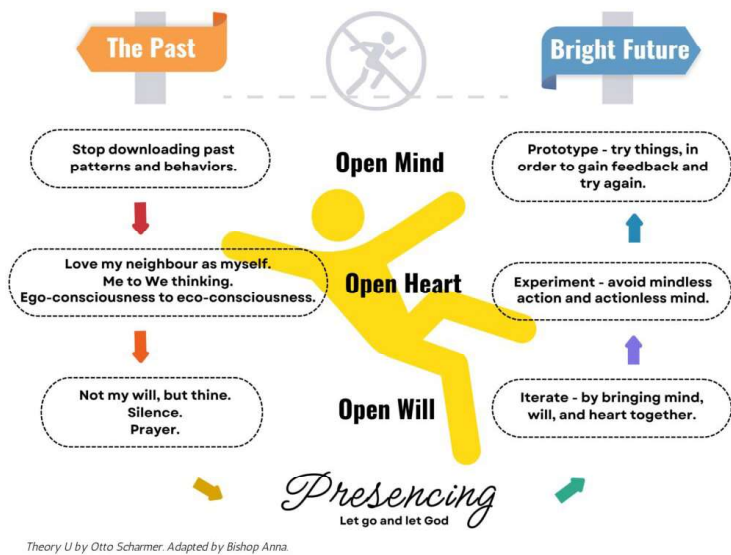
In Revelation we get this timeless image of the day when every tear will be wiped away and all things will be made new.

And then, in today's gospel, Jesus himself weeps. The shortest sentence in all the gospels: and Jesus began to weep.

Yes, God is making all things new; yes, the home of God is among mortals. But it's only human to shed a tear or two along the way, even Jesus did. For death, well death, stinks. And there is simply no way to get to resurrection without it.

While completing my MBA, I did a lot of work on change theory and became enamored with what is called Theory U, which, if you want to look it up, was developed by a man at MIT called Otto Scharmer. The basic premise of it is that when truly deep change is needed, you can't just leap from one thing to another. You have, instead, to do a path of descent and resurrection.

As much as we'd like to believe that to get from one thing to the other you can just build a bridge — usually in the form of a strategic plan — and, in an orderly and organised way, get from one side of the chasm to the other, Theory U suggests that when truly transformative change is required the only way to get there is to go down one side of the U and up the other.



Theory U by Otto Scharmer. Adapted by Bishop Anna

This is why the funny person on the Theory U diagram Paula and I made for you looks like they are falling.

The path of descent, in the language of Theory U, is that we have to open our minds, our hearts and our wills so that we can become present to what new thing is possible.

We need to open our minds by not simply trying to solve problems, or see reality by downloading past patterns and behaviors, but by seeing with fresh eyes, listening with new ears.

We open your hearts by moving from “me” to “we.” By letting go of how I see and understand things, to seeing and understanding from the perspective of the system as a whole. Scharmer calls this moving from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness. Which to me, sounds a whole lot like loving our neighbours as ourselves.

And finally, we open our wills, which to me sounds a whole lot like the Christian idea of kenosis or self-emptying. We put aside our own will and desires and open ourselves to what God is doing in our midst.

Once the system as a whole has done all of this, we are at the bottom of the U and what Scharmer calls presenceing. With all his fancy MIT credentials, the language and images that Scharmer uses are borrowed from Christianity. He likens the presenceing to a camel passing through the eye of the needle, and he posits that it is work that can really only be done in silence, by letting go and letting come.

He talks about how what will come is bigger and more different than anything that could have happened without doing the work of opening the mind, the heart and the will; of moving from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness, of sensing not from the self, but from the whole; and then of just letting go and letting God. Maybe in that silence you shed a tear or two.

But then, but then by God’s grace we rise again.

But, says Scharmer, to rise again we actually have to do something. We have to bring the mind, heart and will in a new way and we have to incarnate something new. We have to iterate and prototype our way into the new. We have to try new things in order to gain feedback and try again. We have to be careful of mindless action, just doing things without reflecting, but equally so of actionless mind, of just talking and talking and talking and never actually doing anything.

And so, my friends, that’s a lot of change theory for a Friday night. But I offer you this model as I believe it’s a helpful tool for us as the Diocese of Islands and Inlets.

Tomorrow morning Scott is going to talk to us about what it means to be a synod. What it means to live synodically. He’s going to remind us that the word synod means “together on the path,” and I’d suggest

that the path we are on is this path of descent and rising; of death and of resurrection; of opening our minds, hearts and wills so that we can let go and let come. So that we can trust that the house of God is among mortals and that God is always and everywhere making all things new.

“Behold, behold I make all things new, beginning with you and starting from today. Behold, behold I make all things new, my promise is true for I am Christ the way.”

During Synod opening worship, Lisa Alexander was commissioned as a lay canon and Jenny Replogle was installed as a diocesan canon. Below are welcome letters from Bishop Anna, Lisa and Jenny.

[Welcome Letter from Bishop Anna to Canon Jenny](#)

[Welcome Letter from Bishop Anna to Canon Lisa](#)

[Welcome Letter from Canon Jenny](#)

[Welcome Letter from Canon Lisa](#)

Synod 2024 — ‘Together on the path’



The processional entering the cathedral during the All Saints Synod 2024 opening worship. Image copyright: J. Abram Photography.

By Eric Partridge

On Nov. 1–2, 2024, the Anglican Synod of the Diocese of British Columbia met for the 102nd Synod. That mouthful is our full, official name, which is why a few years ago we filed with the BC Business Registry an official operating name: The Diocese of Islands and Inlets.

On Friday, Nov. 1, all were invited to join in worship at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee gave her [Bishop’s charge](#) and set the theme for this synod: together on the path.

On Saturday, with Bishop’s charge in our hearts, we met at the Baumann Centre next door to St John the Divine, Victoria, for the business portion of the synod.

After the land acknowledgement, delegates heard the keynote speaker, Scott Sharman, talk about what he called “synodality.” Sharman is the executive officer and canon theologian in mission of the diocese of Edmonton, and the animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations for the national church.

Sharman told us that “synod” is a term that comes from the Greek “syn” meaning “with” and “hodos” meaning “path” or “road.” Putting them together, he explained, leads us to being “together on the path.” Being synodical is not just a two-day event that happens every two years, but rather a way of gathering, worshipping and living together that has three elements: it is collegial, dialogical and provisional. Collegial, rather than hierarchical, in that we are called to all be ministers of faith; dialogical in that we are called to not just tell others of our faith but are also called to listen and learn from them about their experience of God; and provisional in that we have never completed the journey but are always on the path.

Following Sharman’s keynote, the meeting turned to its business: that of voting and passing motions.

Elected for the term until the next synod (which will be in the fall of 2026) were:

Lay secretary: Susan Rand

Clerical secretary: Heather Robinson

Diocesan treasurer: Joel Hefty

Diocesan court: Walter Stewart, Jane Morley and Elizabeth Northcott

Diocesan council: Marjorie Aitken, Marion Edmondson, Ed Norman, Trish Vollman-Stock, Cory Herrera, Craig Hiebert, Helen Love and Kelly Duncan.
Representatives to General Synod: Helen Love, Ian

Alexander, Michael Wolff, Lon Towstego, Jenny Replogle and Kirsten Evenden.

Representatives to Provincial Synod: Helen Love, Julie Foster, Cory Herrera, Lon Towstego and Stephanie Wood.

Our new treasurer, Joel Hefty, gave a report on the finances of the diocese since the last synod in May 2023. He also spoke of the changes that are being instituted in our financial systems that will help make the diocese more efficient and more easily managed by parishes and the synod office, and he introduced our new finance director, Gregory Ptolemy.

The synod then turned its mind to the motions brought by diocesan council, on the recommendation of the canons committee, for a new set of canons and regulations. The original canons and regulations were promulgated under the *Synod Incorporation Act* of the BC legislature in 1889. Since that time, the canons and regulations have been amended and re-amended without a complete re-write — until now.

In May 2023, at the last synod, the canons committee was given the task of completely re-writing the constitution, canons and regulations, to present to this synod a version that:

1. Is in plain language;
2. Is consistent in terms, process and formatting;
3. Reflects our current experience;
4. Reflects the appropriate division among canons, regulations and policy;
5. Is forward looking, allowing for future flexibility where flexibility is appropriate.

Chancellor Isabel Weeks tabled, on behalf of diocesan council, a new version of the canons and regulations, as

well as a few minor changes to the constitution. These new canons and regulations had been the product of eighteen months of drafting, consultation and amendments. The final product was approved by a unanimous vote of synod and will come into force on Jan. 1, 2025. The constitutional amendments proposed were approved by this synod but must be approved by two synods, so will come once again before Synod 2026 for final consideration.

Chancellor Isabel Weeks pointed out that these new canons were created collegially, in that they were written by a committee of four laity and one cleric. They were dialogical, as the committee listened to and incorporated the input from so many others. And they are provisional as they are a living document, written in a way that allows for future amendments that may be required.

Synod closed with final remarks from Scott Sharman, followed by a surprise jazz version of the motion of thanks by Craig Hiebert and a blessing by Bishop Anna.

Gathering as a synod is the basis for our diocesan governance and happens once every two years, or so. It is hoped that each synod helps make our life together easier and smoother, and clears the way for us to better worship and serve God, our church and our communities. It feels as if Synod 2024 has admirably done that.

Photo gallery: All Saints Synod 2024 opening worship



Tea lights lit to honour the dearly departed. Image copyright: J. Abram Photography.

By Faith Tides

Below is a gallery of images from the opening worship service for Synod 2024, held on Nov. 1, the Feast of All Saints. It is a day when we celebrate the thin veil between life and death, and remember those we love and see no longer. For the service, brightly coloured flags were hung above the nave, bearing the names of loved ones that people from across the diocese submitted. The flags honoured those who are no longer with us and acted as a visible reminder of the cloud of witnesses that join us in our worship. After communion, attendees were invited to light small candles to remember the dearly departed.

To watch the full service, including the Bishop's charge, [visit the cathedral website](#).



Jonathan Thomas installed as dean of the diocese and rector of Christ Church Cathedral



Jonathan Thomas (centre) and clergy on the steps of Christ Church Cathedral. Image copyright: J. Abram Photography.

By Naomi Racz

Sunday, Sept. 29, 2024 marked the 95th feast of the dedication of Christ Church Cathedral. A fitting day, then, for the installation and induction of Jonathan Thomas as the Dean of British Columbia and Rector of Christ Church Cathedral during choral evensong at the cathedral.

Jonathan comes to the Diocese of Islands and Inlets from the Diocese of Chicago, where he and his wife [Jenny Replogle](#) served as co-rectors of St Paul's, Peoria

for nine years. Prior to discerning a call to ordained ministry, Jonathan was a high school teacher. He earned a master of divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, a diploma in Anglican studies from Virginia Theological Seminary and a certificate in non-profit management from the Kellogg School of Management.

The service opened with a territorial acknowledgement by Jonathan. Then, those in attendance, or watching along on the livestream, enjoyed the world premiere of a setting of the “Jubilate Deo” (Psalm 100) by British-American composer David Briggs. This introit was commissioned especially for the installation by an anonymous donor. A second original composition was heard later on in the service during the installation: a setting of Psalm 84 (“How lovely is your dwelling place”) by the cathedral’s director of music, Donald Hunt.

Another unique feature of the music for this service was the diocesan massed choir, which bought together singers from the cathedral choir, the Christ Church Cathedral School young choristers, the parish choir, the cathedral youth choir, and from eight other parishes across the diocese. All in all, there were 80 singers present.

Donald Hunt had this to say about his choice of music for the service: “I aimed to draw from the riches of the Anglican musical tradition with a specific view to representing parts of the world pertinent to the day’s celebration. So we had music from Canada; the United States, where our new dean comes from; as well as the UK, which is the motherland of the great choral tradition; and I tried to select a mixture of familiar and new, including the hymn choices.

“The church of Christ in every age’ was chosen for the

way that it encourages us to think about the church as something which is always changing and evolving, however slowly. This is a reflection of my role as the steward of a musical tradition rooted in its past but constantly growing and evolving, our new dean's role in managing change at the cathedral and in the diocese and the whole church's role to bring about positive change in the world around us."

The installation and induction of a dean and rector

During this service, Jonathan was installed and inducted as a dean and rector. But what do all these terms mean, you might be wondering? As a rector, Jonathan is the priest in charge of the cathedral parish's spiritual life, as well as its practical arrangements, such as presiding at meetings of the cathedral management team. As dean, Jonathan is considered the chief priest of the diocese, and the bishop's deputy.

The induction part of the ceremony invests the rector with all the rights and responsibilities of that office. While "installation" refers to the office of dean and invests the dean-designate with the authority and responsibility to hold this office.

The induction took place first. Bishop Anna asked Jonathan a series of questions, to which he responded "I will, with God's help." These included asking that he make the cathedral a house of prayer for all people, and whether he will willingly carry out the duties of his office. The Bishop then addressed the clergy in attendance and asked whether they will support Jonathan as their dean. Finally, the Bishop addressed the congregation and asked if they too would support and uphold Jonathan.

Jonathan was then presented with a series of gifts that

symbolize the rights and responsibilities of the office of rector. Church wardens Anthony Danda and Sue Simpson presented Jonathan with keys and a Book of Common Prayer, which symbolize the temporal and spiritual life of the church. Jenny Replogle then presented Jonathan with the seal of the Diocese of Islands and Inlets in the form of a tippet patch. The seal symbolizes the dean's role as a partner in ministry with clergy and churches across the whole diocese. Lastly, Julian Daly, executive director of Our Place Society, presented Jonathan with a Bible. This gift is given on behalf of the entire community of Victoria and symbolizes the dean's duty to live out the values of his faith in his interactions with the community.

After being presented with these gifts, Jonathan was led to a special chair (or stall, hence "installation") whose woodwork and embroidery mark it with symbols signifying the role of dean. The diocesan massed choir sang Donald Hunt's composition of Psalm 84, and then Bishop Anna completed the installation, adding her own words: "Jonathan, I see in you both a gentle wisdom and a mighty faith, and it is with great gratitude and humility that I present to you your new dean, Jonathan Thomas." This was followed by enthusiastic applause.

The homily

Jonathan delivered the homily and began by focusing in on a particular line from the reading: "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering." (Hebrews 10:23) To which Jonathan responded, "'without wavering,' really? My expression of hope is often more like a breathy whisper than a full-throated confession."

This, he is aware, "is only a comment on my fallible

faith and failing human vision of God at work around us. Hope itself is not that fragile a thing; it can stand up to the realities of the world better than my mere confession of it can.”

Jonathan then looked at some of the imagery of hope in popular culture. Emily Dickinson described hope as “the thing with feathers – / That perches in the soul …” But Jonathan feels this imagery is too weak, too dainty, and that if hope does have wings then they are dragon wings “attached to a scaly armored body ready to do battle, and a mouth that breathes fire to light up the night of your soul, and of our world.”

Or another possible image for hope: a boxer who, despite getting knocked down, repeatedly gets back up to his feet. Why a boxer? Because the world needs a kind of hope that, despite all evidence to the contrary, believes that a better future is possible and is able to muster the energy to get back up time and time again and proclaim that hope in the streets.

Jonathan talked about some of the many issues facing countless people in our diocese, including homelessness, substance abuse disorders, religious persecution and loneliness, which has reached epidemic proportions. “What they are longing for,” says Jonathan, “is hope that what that great visionary Anglican healer Desmond Tutu used to call ‘the dream of God’ is not some ethereal promise, or far off reality, but is yet possible in the here and now.” What they need is parishioners, civic leaders, non-profit partners, First Nations members and interfaith leaders who can make that hope a tangible reality.

Returning to the imagery of hope, Jonathan pointed to the central image of hope in the Christian tradition: that of the resurrected Christ, who knew suffering and

death, and had the scars to prove it, but who still walked out into the world with a message of hope. What those who are suffering need, said Jonathan, is professions of hope. That could look like civic leaders who are willing to wade into intractable problems, or non-profit managers who find a way to piece together the funding they need to keep their programs running, or it may look like a church finding meaning and purpose in the face of loss.

Jonathan ended his homily with a promise and a call to action: “I’m in it with you if you will be in it with me.”

To hear the full homily, [watch the cathedral livestream](#), or read it by [downloading the text](#). Below is a gallery of images from the choral evensong service.



How to be salt and yeast



Photo by [Timo Volz](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By [John J. Thatamanil](#)

In [my September reflection](#) in *Faith Tides*, I mused about whether it might be possible for the church to learn how to be small but mighty. I argued that we need to recover the ancient metaphors of smallness that Jesus routinely employed, salt and yeast being the most prominent. Both are examples of tiny things that make a huge difference. No wonder that Jesus used these examples to encourage a miniscule community of followers to imagine how they might make a difference in a world of daunting imperial powers. Now that the church is dwindling in numbers and no longer sits squarely at the heart of cultural power, we are once more in a situation that approximates the early church. So, what is the church called to do now?

We find clues right there in Jesus's small metaphors. Neither salt nor yeast is any good save as part of something larger. Nothing that is over salted is remotely appetizing. These metaphors only work

because they take for granted that the larger world is full of great good — a good world in need of a critical pinch of salt. That world, therefore, cannot be a God-abandoned wasteland. If that were so, neither salt nor yeast would make any difference.

Jesus's core metaphors require a basic trust in the goodness of the world and the free ranging work of the Holy Spirit, out there in the wild. If the church is to learn how to be salt and yeast again, it must rediscover this basic trust that God is always already busy building the beloved community beyond the church walls. The church is not God's sole agent in the world. Ours is the task to offer a quickening and catalyzing hand.

If that is so, then, a primary work to which the church is called is the keen-eyed labor of discernment. A core question for us: where is God *already* at work in the world, and how can we kindly, unobtrusively and meaningfully lend a helping a hand?

Does that sound too small, too humble a question to ask? Well, the church could do with a good dose of humility after centuries of imperial overreach. Small but meaningful difference is a worthy aspiration for a battered institution currently lacking moral credibility.

In its discerning work, the church looks to Jesus' life for clues to find God-shaped work as it takes place in the world. Where is new life happening? Where are the poor and dispossessed receiving the care they need? Where is the inherent dignity of persons being recognized and celebrated? Where is love breaking forth?

Answer those questions and we will find fitting ways

for the church to come alongside and stand with those who are already doing spirit-inspired work. Struggling with those key questions will almost always be local work. Where is healing happening in just this neighborhood? Who's feeding the homeless here? Where are the voices calling for creation care that need to be elevated? Who's advocating for doing something about skyrocketing rents in this city?

Again, these questions presuppose that God is busy even when the church slumbers. Self-importance does not become us. We need not imagine ourselves as God's importer-exporters bringing the divine to God-forsaken places — the very sign of colonialism. We should know by now that there is no place in which God is not already present!

Of course, there will come moments when the church must be bold, unapologetic and forthright. When human dignity is being erased, when antidemocratic forces seek to undo the public good, when the forces of fascism knock at the door, a prophetic posture will be the need of the hour.

But the day in, day out work of the church will be salt and yeast work — unassuming labour that accompanies those who are already doing spirit-led work out in the world. This is God's world after all. The church exists for the world; not the world for the church.

‘What it means to be the church today’: interview with Jenny Replogle

By Naomi Racz



Image courtesy of Jenny Replogle.

challenges facing the Anglican church. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Naomi Racz: Could you tell me a bit about your background, where you grew up, what your surroundings were like, and a bit about your early religious influences?

Jenny Replogle: I grew up all over the place. We moved

around every two or three years growing up, mostly around the South. I spent more time than anywhere though in Louisiana, outside New Orleans. I grew up Methodist until I was 11. And then, when we moved to Louisiana, my parents joined a Southern Baptist church and they put me at an evangelical Christian school. So, I grew up in an evangelical, Southern Baptist, conservative subculture through junior high and high school. It both deeply influenced my faith, but also left me in a place where I was always struggling and had questions. My faith was really important to me and I found Christianity really beautiful and compelling, and deeply cared about it, and struggled with a lot of what was being taught.

When I went to college, that all broke open. I went to a Southern Baptist college in Mississippi, and both seeing how racism was handled and how queer folks were treated really broke open things for me. I just got to the point that I couldn't abide by how the church that I was in was treating people. At that time, I also worked in youth ministry and started to, I would say, feel a call. But I was really unsure about it because of what I was also seeing in church.

I worked in the nonprofit world for a little bit, I did AmeriCorps for a year, and then decided to go to seminary to see if there was a place in the church that I could live with integrity. I also wanted to hear different voices across the Christian spectrum. I went to Princeton for seminary and I did find that, and was really grateful for it. In the last couple of years I found the Episcopal Church. I had seen so many disagreements, and, so often, to think differently in the churches that I grew up with was a problem and was a reason to basically cast you out, or say that you didn't fully believe. Whereas, in the Anglican tradition, we were made stronger by us being different and coming

in with different backgrounds and beliefs. That was really beautiful to me and a vision of church that I could be part of. And so I joined the Episcopal Church and then eventually started the ordination process there.

NR: Could you tell me a bit about your career so far within the Anglican and Episcopal Church?

JR: Right as I was ordained, I was called back to Princeton, to the Episcopal church there, where I served as curate, and then associate rector, in a really large corporate parish — a 2000 member parish — with a couple of priests. It was a great place to start out and learn to be a priest. While I was there, I was put on a bishop search committee. Then, later on in my career, at my next job, I was made co-chair of another bishop search committee. So that's been a big part of my career as well. I really loved being part of those conversations and figuring out where the fit was in ministry, and where we were all being called to use our gifts to serve and share in ministry together.

Jonathan [Thomas, rector of Christ Church Cathedral] and I realized that we really wanted to work together. And so, we discerned a call to be co-rectors and found a parish in Peoria, Illinois, to serve as co-rectors.

NR: I can't imagine there are too many husband-wife co-rector teams. Why did you decide to work together in that way and what was it like?

JR: Some of that was because of the season in our life. We were having kids, so we thought it would just be better for us. But the more we talked about ministry, we found that we had really similar visions of church. This was a way to demonstrate and embody partnership. So much of the church is bound in

hierarchy, especially in the US. Even though it shouldn't be, we function in a hierarchy of clergy and lay people, rather than seeing clergy and lay people as partners in ministry.

And the place that we went was the most hierarchical place we've ever seen. And so it became more and more important to us to embody partnership and that ministry could be shared, and that sharing of ministry also happened between clergy and lay people, rather than having a top-down hierarchical way of leading a church. We have different roles, but different roles don't make one higher than others. If we live out our different roles, we actually live out ministry in better ways. Being co-rectors, we tried to embody that for nine years. Sometimes we were more successful than others and it was always, always a learning process to figure out how to do it.

NR: Can you tell me a bit more about your specific role in the diocese and the kinds of things you're going to be doing as part of that role?

JR: There's two main areas of focus. One is lay-led parishes: those parishes that don't have permanent or settled clergy, which is becoming more and more of our parishes. I think at one point we would have considered them vacant and waiting for a priest. But now we've accepted the reality that this is probably the way things are going forward.

And so instead of "how do we go back to the way things were?" we are asking "how do they become more faithful and healthy and effective as they are?" How do we support the ministry that they're doing? Because these parishes are doing great ministry. How do we support that, and support the lay leaders there, and figure out what ministry looks like today in the

context of those places? Now, all of them are in different places, many of them on different islands. And it's going to look different for each place, but my job is to walk alongside them and help them figure out how to embody and live out their ministry more fully. And to figure out what supports they need, and how we get them those supports.

The other part is the parishes in transition, and that's working with parishes that are in transition for any number of reasons. The main one being that their clergy are leaving, or have left, and they are calling new clergy. I'll be developing profiles, posting jobs and working with candidates to find the best fit for those parishes. But also working with congregations that are in transition with their building. There's any number of transitions places could be going through. I think transitions are really holy and they are a liminal time where we're in between what we knew and what will come. And so we often open ourselves up to new ways of God working in us, and new possibilities.

There's also grief involved in it. It's really hard. It's not just all hopeful and exciting. It's this big mix of grief and hope, and often pain and struggle, and also possibility. That's a really special time to get to walk with a congregation and also to be able to dream about what God is calling us to in the next phase of ministry.

NR: Will you be doing a lot of travelling around the island and going to different parishes?

JR: Yes. I'm really clear that I can only walk alongside people in ministry if I'm actually where they are, and know what they're doing. Ministry isn't an abstract thing that we do as a parish somewhere. We do it as particular people, in particular places. So it's really important to me to be out where people are, to get to

know their ministry and also to honor that they're the experts in their ministry. I'm not the expert coming in from the outside. I'm someone who's coming in to offer resources and tools, and support them.

NR: What do you see as some of the challenges facing the diocese and the wider Anglican church, and is that different between Canada and the US? Or do you see similarities there in terms of challenges that are being faced?

JR: I am sure there are differences. Like I was saying, ministries are only lived out in really particular contexts. So those contexts are different, but I would say, overall, the large challenges are pretty similar. That's true, I would say, in the Western world.

We're at a really big inflection point overall around Christianity and the church, and figuring out what it means to be the church today. Our world is increasingly secular, but also increasingly connected and sharing information in really different ways. We've seen the church change about every 500 years, largely with massive changes in communications. We have a church that's mostly — and this is true of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada — structured for boomers in the fifties and sixties. And so much of how we do church is still based on that model, and that's not the world we live in anymore. We have to figure out what it means, and there's a lot of grief and loss involved in that. It's really hard.

But it's also full of opportunity. When Christianity is not the primary cultural thing that's holding people together and people aren't going to church because it's the culturally right thing to do, we get freed up to actually talk about what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world, and what it means to be the

body of Christ. It's really exciting to be doing this work. There are challenges. But they're exciting challenges because we get to dream of new ways of doing things, and figure out what it means to be the church today, in our world.

'A love affair with church': interview with Rebecca Yeo

By Rebecca Yeo

Where did you grow up and what were your early religious influences and experiences?



Image courtesy of Rebecca Yeo.

I was born and raised on the Saanich Peninsula (unceded W̱SÁNEĆ territory). I did French immersion at school, took dance lessons in North Saanich, spent my Labour Day long weekends at the Saanich Fair and saw the lights at Butchart Gardens every Christmastime.

My childhood was a love affair with church. I have

treasured memories of Sunday school, Christmas pageants, and Sunday mornings spent singing hymns and eating goldfish. I experienced my faith primarily through song and story, communion bread and crafts, and carefully playing with ladybugs in sunlight filtered through stained glass. I loved taking communion, but could never understand why we needed to pray for so long first. I drew nativity scenes obsessively every December — my mother still has a collection of them! Looking back, I can see many of the building blocks of the faith of my adulthood: I love the sensory experience of church (its scents, sounds and art), I love to sing and chant, and I have a deep devotion to the incarnation and the eucharist (sometimes, I still wonder why the prayer is so long).

What studies have you done and what route did you take for your studies?

I did my undergraduate degree in religious studies at Mount Allison University, in New Brunswick. Looking back, these years were formative in shaping my path to ordination and ministry. Majoring in religious studies fostered my capacity to engage critically with my own religious tradition and unflinchingly acknowledge Christianity's shadow side. Conversely, I discovered marginal voices with incredible wisdom — this is where I first explored feminist, queer, postcolonial and disability theology. I also uncovered a deep appreciation for and curiosity about other religious traditions, embraced the significance of embodiment in Christian theology and found spiritual kinship with the mystics of the medieval Church — especially Margery Kempe, who was the protagonist of my undergraduate honours thesis.

After Mount A, I was ready to move back to the West Coast, which led me to Vancouver School of Theology.

I was also drawn to VST's emphasis on Indigenous studies and interreligious studies. In May 2024, I completed my master of divinity. I am still working to complete a master of arts in Indigenous and interreligious studies, with a focus on the spiritual practice of grief and lament in an interreligious context.

What is a transitional deacon and what do you see as the role of the (transitional) deacon in the church?

Deacons are one of the three orders of clergy that Anglicans have (the others being priest and bishop). There is a convention of calling deacons "transitional" and "vocational" — vocational deacons are called to the specific ministry of the diaconate, whereas transitional deacons (like me!) will spend time as deacons before being ordained to the priesthood. This convention is falling out of use, which makes me happy! I think that making the distinction diminishes the work of deacons and makes it far too easy to treat the diaconate as a stepping stone on the way to priesthood. One day, God willing, I will be a priest; right now, I am a deacon and am committed to the particular work of the diaconate.

Deacons have a ministry of service and are meant to focus our attention on the needs of the world, translating them to the church. In our liturgy, this ministry is embodied by the fact that deacons proclaim the Gospel, set the table for the eucharist and assist the priest in administering it, and dismiss the people — sending them forth to "love and serve the world." I see my work as a spiritual care provider at the University of Victoria as the perfect diaconal ministry: I work outside of a typical parish setting, spending time with folks with little-to-no experience of church (many of whom have been harmed by Christianity). I feel most

like a deacon when I am making coffee for Pet Café, talking with students about anything from assignments to politics to theology and when I share stories of faith with curious friends and acquaintances.

Can you tell me a bit about your current work or studies, what your next steps are and what you're excited for in the future?

Currently, I am an Anglican co-spiritual care provider at the Multifaith Centre at the University of Victoria. I sponsor Pet Café (bringing therapy dogs to the Multifaith Centre) and the Inclusive Christians club, a group that strives to represent a progressive, affirming Christianity in our campus community. My ministry at UVic is also one of presence and relationship building: with students, other spiritual care providers, staff and faculty. Right now, what I am most excited about is a service of blessing on a student's gender transition that I am helping to put together.

I am also working to complete my master of arts in Indigenous and interreligious studies. My main academic focus this year is on my capstone project, which explores grief as an interspiritual practice, and the possibility of creating an interreligious space for grieving and lamenting together. My hope is to create programming for the Multifaith Centre in the new year: an inclusive, holistic, interreligious space for students from different backgrounds to express grief in the language of their respective religious and spiritual traditions. Grief often feels lonely and isolating; however, it is a near-universal human experience. The vulnerability of sharing our grief with each other is also an exercise in sharing our humanity and connecting more deeply, and I hope to offer these opportunities in the UVic community.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I have always been a voracious reader! I usually have at least one book on the go, and I like to keep track of how many books I read in a year. I'll give anything a shot, but I have a deep, abiding love of fantasy, poetry and horror.

A hobby that is a big part of my life is a weekly tabletop role-playing game session with a group of friends. Currently, we are playing a Pathfinder campaign. My character in this campaign is a little rogue, trying to run an effective spy network while navigating her party's chaotic decisions and tense romantic developments. In addition to being great fun, these games provide me with a safe way to practice skills like communication, problem solving and improvisation. Above all, I treasure the sense of community and intimacy that comes from telling stories together.

PWRDF announces new name

By Naomi Racz



Alongside Hope

Anglicans and partners working for change
in Canada and around the world

On Oct. 15, in a special members meeting, PWRDF approved a new name for the organisation: Alongside Hope. The organisation's new tagline is "Anglicans and partners working for change in Canada and around the world." In French the new name is *Auprès de l'espoir*, and the tagline is "Anglicans et partenaires œuvrant pour le changement au Canada et à travers le monde."

PWRDF, or the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, was founded in 1959 by the Anglican Church of Canada, following a mining disaster in Springhill, NS, that killed 75 men. Originally known as the Primate's World Relief Fund, the focus initially was on providing assistance quickly during emergencies.

However, over the next decade the organisation began to see the link between development needs and the suffering caused by natural and human-caused disasters, and in 1969, the word "development" was added to its name. PWRDF now works with more than 70 partners in 32 countries.

In a [presentation on the new name](#), Cynthia Haines-Turner, a parish priest and PWRDF board member, speaks about first hearing discussions around the need for a new name back in 2001, when she became a diocesan representative. She also spoke about her own

journey from being initially resistant, to being reluctant, to ambivalence, to finally being convinced a name change was needed.

Finally, in 2022, the PWRDF board approved a budget, and a task team was created to identify a new name. The task team included staff, board members and volunteers from across Canada. The team met on Zoom to try and identify a name that better reflects PWRDF's work, and that would both honour its legacy and sustain its work into the future.

PWRDF engaged creative agency Cyan Solutions to lead conversations with the task team and other volunteers. In all of these discussions, one clear theme emerged: partnership. PWRDF partners with local organizations; with membership organizations, such as the Anglican Alliance, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and KAIROS; with funding agencies; with the Anglican Church of Canada (PWRDF became a separately incorporated agency in 2000), Anglican dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces; and of course with clergy, volunteers and donors.

The task team looked to stories of partnership in the Bible and was particularly drawn to the story of the road to Emmaus. Days after Jesus died, the disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, when the resurrected Jesus came alongside them. But they did not know it was him, until he accepted their hospitality to dine with them. In the breaking of bread, their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

Cynthia states that these discussions generated over 200 possible names. "Many of us had an idea of what we might have liked to have seen," says Cynthia in her presentation. "But there are a whole bunch of complicating factors ... Many names that we might

have liked have been taken, or copyrighted by somebody else ... It became apparent that our scope was much more limited than we might have hoped."

The new name, Alongside Hope, grew from the discussions around partnership and walking alongside one another in order to embody hope for a better world. "It speaks to our aspirational endeavors," says Cynthia. "But it also speaks to the practical part of our ministry. Hope is a necessary element to our work. It is something we are called to as people of God, to be people of hope." On a very practical level, it is also hoped that the new name will be easy to pronounce and will avoid the need for acronyms.

"Alongside Hope conveys what is so important for us as a ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada," says Will Postma, executive director of PWRDF. "Alongside Hope is about walking alongside our partners and many supporters, learning, listening and being together. As a faith-inspired agency, we want to support projects that demonstrate a love for our neighbour in real-life, real-context ways ... Alongside Hope is a new name that builds on a legacy of many years of partnership and inspires us forward to care for creation and build hope for the well-being of communities and generations to come."

The transition to a new name will take place over the next year. Changes to the website and social media will come into effect on March 1, 2025, for the very practical reason of allowing time to complete tax receipts for 2024 under the PWRDF name.

If you have any question about the new name, send your questions to pwrdf@pwrdf.org. For media requests, please email Janice Biehn, communications and marketing coordinator at jbiehn@pwrdf.org.

Women's fall retreat — 'Looking at the ordinary and seeing the extraordinary'

By Diane Hutchison



*Women's fall retreat participants at Camp Pringle.
Photo by Kim Foote.*

summery fall weekend (Oct. 4–6), 28 women came together at Camp Pringle. Following the Franciscan practice, Bill Tarter, a Franciscan brother in our diocese and facilitator for this year's fall retreat, set out an open Bible (we were in the presence of the word of God), a small plant (aware of our connection to all living things) and a glowing Paschal candle (drawing us together and forward).

Together we reviewed the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* (divine reading), taking time willingly with the word of God, and deepening our understanding and relationship with the word. We pondered the Franciscan practice of taking what we've heard with our hearts out into our work, and acting on how we've been moved.

The exploration of *Visio Divina* — the work of God in the world revealed through nature and creation, and the ordinary events of our lives — had us thinking of the joy and amazement when rainbows appear; re-examining the rough texture of fireplace stonework; gazing on a beautifully painted icon but seeing the expression of a deep love and hope in the mother's eyes; and looking past the sun's reflection on the lake outside to see the life teeming under the water's surface.

Moving from the physical hearing and seeing, we examined sacramental seeing: recognizing the outward and visible signs of the inward, invisible reality of God's grace. Whether it's in the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, or the informal events where we experience and feel God's presence, we see that God is willing to eat and drink with us and that we are beloved children of God. It's about relationship, recognizing God loves us. As we love one another, God lives in us, and that love continues to transform us to burst out and spread everywhere.

We certainly experienced that transformative love throughout the weekend, in the formal presentations, in the conversations with others around the dining tables, in walks around the camp property and in the liturgies offered on all three days.

St Andrew's, Sidney hosts a week of accompanied prayer

By Naomi Racz



Pictured (left to right) are the spiritual companions for the week of accompanied prayer at St Andrew's, Sidney: Margaret McAvity, Glenna Tiedje, Barbara Baillie and Barbara Holt. Photo by Kelly Duncan.

Margaret McAvity, a parishioner at St Andrew's, Sidney, proposed holding a week of accompanied prayer at the church, Kelly Duncan, the incumbent at St Andrew's, was keen on the idea. Although the origins of the week of accompanied prayer are unclear, Kelly describes it as "a retreat in the middle of daily life." Margaret first encountered this type of retreat at Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, when Ellen Clark-King was a priest associate there. Kelly had also taken part in a week of accompanied prayer at her

former church of St Mary's in Vancouver.

The dates were set for Oct. 6–12, and four spiritual companions, including Margaret, were found. Of the four, three were from this diocese and one has a United Church background. The week opened with a service of blessing on the Sunday afternoon, led by Kelly. Given that the week was leading up to Thanksgiving, Kelly highlighted the theme of "gratitude" in the opening session, which emerged again throughout the week as participants reflected on what they were grateful for.

When From Monday to Friday, the 14 participants — all parishioners of St Andrew's, and ranging in age from a school teacher to three 96 year-olds — met at the church for a one hour, one-on-one session with their spiritual companion. Participants met with the same spiritual companion, at the same time, everyday, in the same space in the church. On the following Saturday there was a closing service to wrap up the week.

"People have the support and the encouragement of an individual trained spiritual companion," says Kelly. "And they talk about their prayer life, and they talk about how to deepen their connection with God. Each day they commit to spending some time in prayer, trying out the methods that the spiritual companion has suggested. Then they come back and talk about it with the spiritual companions, so that there is that support and that accountability each day."

Margaret emphasized that although the week was about supporting and enhancing the spiritual life of the participants, it also had the added benefit of enhancing the spiritual life of the members of the congregation who offered their support.

“They provided lunch for the companions,” says Margaret. “They also provided tea, coffee and cookies for people as they were coming and going from their meetings, so they could stop and talk with each other. So, it provided hospitality and community involvement for the parish. It’s not just about the individuals deepening their own faith, but strengthening the congregation and the prayer life of the congregation.”

Margaret felt that it was also a very positive experience for the spiritual companions. “We heard from them how touched they were with the hospitality, and with seeing a very vital community. Although we’re not a young congregation, we’re quite aging, we’re a very faithful congregation.”

Margaret admitted that there was some hesitation from the participants at the start of the week, but that by the end of the week that had all changed. “Our sharing at the end of the week was so profound and rich and deep. I would use the word ‘transformation’ for what happened in people’s lives.”

One participant, David Olsen, described the week as a “milestone” and “revitalizing,” while another participant, Julie Lobb, called the week “amazing.” Julie went on to say that the week offered “space in time, place, thought and



A table set for the closing service of the week of accompanied prayer. Photo by

emotion to dive more deeply and intentionally into

Kelly Duncan.

God’s presence. During the week, prayer became a relationship again. I was able to expand my perception of who God is, how much He loves me and how radically multi-dimensional His presence is in my life. I didn’t necessarily learn anything new about myself, but it feels like my identity as a child of God is more colourful and focused.”

Margaret and Kelly are enthusiastic about the prospect of organizing another week of accompanied prayer at St Andrew’s, and encourage other churches in the diocese to host their own. Reflecting on the practicalities of the event, Margaret felt that it would be good to have someone other than the clergy or spiritual companions overseeing the administrative aspects of organizing the week. An important role for Margaret and Kelly, however, was pairing the participants with their spiritual companion. In some cases, this went beyond simply considering who would be a good fit, to practicalities such as accessibility.

“My wish for this week,” said Margaret, “was that these people who try to lead very faithful Christian lives would receive blessing. That they would just know that they were loved and affirmed in their Christian walk, and I think that happened.”

FUNraising still going strong at St Peter's, Comox

By Vicki Boswell



published [an article describing St Peter's annual winter "FUNraising" auction and how it began](#). This year, by God's grace, the fourth annual auction will be held.

I have attended many churches, in various denominations, in my Christian walk. Though St Peter's is the smallest congregation of my journey, our church family and community has by far the most expansive outreach programs of any of my churches. We still hold a monthly, free community lunch that has

grown since 2022. We host a food bank that not only receives donations from the community but still has an ongoing relationship with partners across the Island. We manage a community take-what-you-need food shelf on the main road through Comox. The Blessings Boutique continues to serve many people in the Valley and beyond. And, of course, we offer Bible studies, prayer ministries and pastoral support, which are always open to those in and outside the church family.

Back in 2022, *Faith Tides*

Some churches operate like a club and are inward-focused. Our parish looks outside its doors and campus to reach the community where they are. The winter "FUNraising" auction is indeed meant to be fun, with some items for sale that are silly or whacky. There are items you will never receive, because when you buy them, we will give them to someone in need. We are tongue in cheek with many of the item descriptions, in the hope we will bring a smile to a few faces, yet there is no mistaking its serious message — we are here to help each other, no matter who or what we are or what we believe.

In my volunteer role, I regularly ask our local businesses to put up posters for upcoming events. While there are a couple of businesses who won't allow our posters because we are a church, the vast majority are open and positive. The other day, I walked my same route with my letters in hand asking for service or product donations in advance of the auction. Many are repeat donors and two of the new ones gave me gift cards right then. These folks know of our presence in the community; and many have participated in an event or two. The rest is in God's hands.

If you would like to support our auction this year, [take a look at the bidding website](#). The auction goes live on Nov. 11, following the in-person viewing, which

coincides with St Peter's Remembrance Day reception. All purchases must be collected in person, unless you buy something that we will be giving away! Take a look, we want you to smile too.

Anglican Church Women meet in Stratford for presidents' conference

By *Gloria Hockley*



The Diocese of Huron hosted the Anglican Church Women's 2024 presidents' conference in Stratford, ON, on Sept. 26–29 (the theme was "Let your light shine"). The National ACW now meets in person every two years and virtually on alternate years.

Following a service of holy eucharist, we were welcomed by the MPP for Perth-Wellington, Matthew

Rae, and the Mayor of Stratford, Martin Ritsma. Greetings were also extended by Karen Haslam, Huron ACW president, and Rosemarie Kingston, president of the national ACW board.

Our evening offering of \$500 was donated to the Council of the North. Our diocese's ACW gave a further \$100 to support the Northern Clergy Family Fund.

Speakers were from the Anglican Foundation of Canada, PWRDF (Alongside Hope), Mothers Union, Council of the North and International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN). They all gave updates on their organizations. Michelle Hauser, AFC's director of development and communications, said AFC has donated over \$40 million. This year's Say Yes! to Kids campaign yielded \$130,000 for 33 teams. National Indigenous youth received \$40,000. The ACW Council of the North Retired Clergy Fund received supported from many diocesan ACWs.

Janice Biehn talked about PWRDF's Indigenous Response Grant Fund, which is available for Indigenous-led communities and organizations. These are one-year grants of between \$5000-\$15,000 for community health, climate action, safe water and emergency response. PWRDF has also set aside funds for emergency response in Canada for wildfires and hurricanes. IAWN is currently re-establishing in Canada, and a former Canadian MU president Kathleen Snow is now world leader of Mothers Union.

We held an all-day business meeting, which included constitutional and financial matters and a workshop. We also allowed time for fun. One evening, a hilarious "fun fashion show," hosted by the Huron ladies, had

everyone laughing. Another evening, we learned dance steps with Scottish country dancers. Saturday's free time saw delegates shopping, boating on the River Avon, perusing Art in the Park, taking a tour of the Stratford Festival's archives and warehouse, and seeing the Stratford Festival production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls presided at the Sunday worship service at St Mark's. She installed the national ACW executive to their positions. Archbishop Linda spoke of angels in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Angels are God's creation. Angels are invisible but occasionally are seen as dreams, sometimes in human form, in the liminal space where they are heard as the angels in the field appearing to the shepherds. Scriptures only refer to them as men. It may be that the writers were men.

There are women serving God. Angels are an example of service. Anglican women are preparing, setting the table and serving: as priests, as wardens, on altar guilds, in choirs, as bishops and as supporters of food banks. These women mirror the work of angels in their life and vocation of serving God not only in the parish but in the community. Archbishop Linda encouraged us to reflect on our work in the world, to worship with joy and to seek to be the bearer of good news. She encouraged us to live with compassion, listen and help those in need.

The theme "Let your light shine" was reinforced throughout the conference. There were theme poems at meal place settings. We are to continue in our spiritual growth and nurture life. We are encouraged to do both the walk and the talk, to spread the light of our baptismal covenant. God shines through us, and we shine our light on God.

Thank you to the diocese for financial support through the Lay Training Fund (Ellenor Swallow Trust).

Theology Beer Camp — 'The future is open'



Photo by [Yutacar](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By *Christine Conkin*

"Where can we plant our feet?" Tripp Fuller asked in his introductory address at Theology Beer Camp, held Oct. 17–19 in Denver, CO. Planting our feet in the past is not an option. Planting our feet in the future is impossible. And, so, standing in the present, we looked towards the future, guided by many of the best theological thinkers of our time.

Each of the seven keynotes reflected on a different aspect of the future: politics, the planet, religion, the past, religious identity, history and, finally, the future of God. It is impossible to summarize it all, but in the

end, I was left with three overall impressions: everything is theological, theological focus has swung back around to wondering about God (as distinct but related to Jesus and Holy Spirit) and the future is open.

First, everything is theological. Politics. Religion. Race. Psychology. Science. Cosmology. Demographics. Philosophy. Ecology. Spirituality. In two days, we covered it all and then some. There was no bracketing out, but always engaging with every aspect of our lives. The expanding complexity could be overwhelming and yet it was also a relief to not be checking any part of our bodies, minds or souls at the door.

Second, theological reflection has swung back around to God. Maybe it never left, but there was no talk of atonement theology, debate about the historical Jesus or theories of the spirit. There was, however, much talk about images of God: the God of the corner office, the higher power, the immutable (pre-evolutionary) God, the white male God. If there was a core focus underlying it all, it might have been about how our images of God impact everything about how we live and move and be and organize and relate and govern and connect and live together.

Third, and perhaps for me most importantly, I was left thinking: the future is open. “The future of God,” final keynote speaker Catherine Keller said, “is an openness, an adventure...” As opposed to know-it-all theology and know-it-all secularism, “the future of God depends on the mystery of everything else,” she said. It’s about wonder, both as verb and noun. Between absolute certainty and absolute mystery, God is the risk of love in the middle. Uncertain. Always becoming. Open.

The idea that “the future is open” is terrifying, in that we would prefer set answers and clear vision that

would solve all our problems: climate crises, war and institutional church decline (to name a few). Openness is also exciting. We have agency and responsibility, with God and one another, to try, to create, to try again, with laughter and tears, bringing the best of scientific knowledge, technological know-how, spiritual depth, philosophical reflection, faith, courage, hope and love to bear on an open future.

Maybe the answer to Tripp’s opening question — where will we plant our feet? — is that we aren’t meant to. We’re meant to move. To explore. To journey. To connect. To relate. The future is not fixed but open. We are co-creators, in relationship with God and one another, of our future. Maybe we can even have a little fun doing it.

Thanks to the Educational Trusts Board of the diocese for the support that enabled me to attend. Find out more about [Theology Beer Camp](#).

Letter to the editor (November 2024)



By Faith Tides

Dear Editor,

Since autumn is often a time for church stewardship campaigns, when tithing might be promoted, I'm writing about concerns I've had for years about the unfairness of tithing. On the surface it sounds fair: everyone is encouraged to give the same 10% proportion of their income. However, the apparent mathematical "equality" belies a deeper truth.

Let's compare, for instance, two people or households: one earning \$20,000 a year (as do many seniors on minimum income), and the other earning \$100,000 a year. 10% of \$20,000 is \$2,000, which, if donated as a tithe, leaves the person or family only \$18,000 to live on and for all other expenses that year. Meanwhile, a person or family with a \$100,000 income can tithe \$10,000 and still have \$90,000 for other expenses.

It's quite difficult for even one person to live on \$18,000 a year after tithing, given today's costs for rent, food, medicine, transportation, etc. It seems cruel to me for churches to expect low-income people to tithe their

income to the church — potentially leaving them almost destitute. Meanwhile, people on a high-income might barely feel the pinch and still have lots of money for luxuries (unless, of course, they're younger people with monstrous mortgages, who are often pressed to desperation, trying to have a home and raise a family).

As Christians, we follow a leader who often made a point of helping the poor. For example, he chose mostly fishermen for his earthly disciples. History tells us how oppressed those fishermen were in that time and place, with excessive or crippling Roman taxes on all their catch. God sees the struggles of the poor much more clearly than we do — sometimes struggling mightily to make ends meet.

As churches, hopefully we can avoid shaming or embarrassing low-income people by promoting tithing as "equal for all."

Sincerely,

Adela Torchia

Christ Church Cathedral
