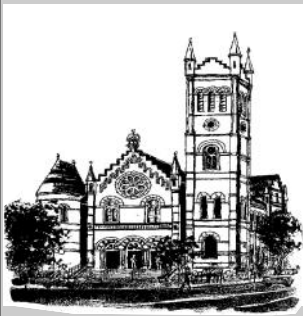


THE LINK

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church



April 2021

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Victoria, BC



A Blessed Easter to each of you!

What do you remember about Easter's past? Family gatherings? Certainly. Waking early to ready your Easter clothes before waking the children? Easter sunrise services and cantatas? Easter egg hunts? Each of these are pleasant memories during my formative years as well as these last many years pastoring churches.

What will characterize Easter 2021? We are sad that a second year will happen without the ability to gather for in-person worship at St. Andrew's. This is generally the day when family arrives from their own homes to spend the day with us and our St. Andrew's family.

I know the year since Easter 2020 has been filled to the brim with changes and challenges that most of us have lived with and adapted to. It would be easy to throw up our hands in despair. Certainly, the increase in vaccinations and warmer weather gives us hope that normal activities may soon return...especially returning to family celebrations and weekly worship.

We can be encouraged by an Easter long ago when theologian and German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent his 3rd year in a Nazi prison. Yet instead of lapsing into despair as many would be tempted to do, Dietrich lived out his final months fearless, faithful, and caring for others.

On April 8, 1945, the first Sunday after Easter, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer led a service for his fellow captives. He prayed, read Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 1:3 and explained the passages to everyone. Those in attendance recall, '[He] spoke to us in a manner which reached the hearts of all, finding just the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment and the thoughts and resolutions which it had bought.'

Bonhoeffer once said that he thought he would die at age forty. In fact, he made it to thirty-nine. Bonhoeffer's hopes for release from prison dimmed. He continued to share his life and bless the world until the very end. Bonhoeffer wrote the following words in his last letters smuggled out of the German prison that held him and took his life:

The world lives by the blessing of God and thus has a future. Blessing means laying one's hands on something and saying, 'Despite everything, you belong to God. This is what we do with the world that inflicts such suffering on us. We do not abandon it; we do not repudiate, despise or condemn it. Instead we call it back to God, we give it hope, we lay our hand on it and say: May God's blessing come upon you, may God renew you; be blessed, world created by God, you who belong to your Creator and Redeemer.'

On the morning of April 9, 1945, Dietrich's life ended at Flossenbürg concentration camp. The day before, he passed on a final message to a fellow prisoner, "This is the end—for me, the beginning of life." He was executed shortly after kneeling and offering a prayer.

Easter is our new beginning. A reminder that new life has been won for us and that Easter is indeed a spiritual beginning for us again. Thanks be to God and Happy Easter to you!

Richest Easter Blessings,
Pastor Mitch

Message from Session

Pastor Coggin opened the meeting with a reading from Isaiah 55: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We asked God for wisdom and guidance in our time together.

Task groups continue to work outside of the monthly session meetings on a number of important issues for our congregation:

- **The virtual worship task group** is exploring the great diversity of how churches are conducting virtual worship. We know that we have on-line worshippers who may or may not join us in the sanctuary and it is important to learn how to reach out to them in a meaningful way.
- We are a congregation in transition, and part of the work of searching for a new minister is the development of a Church Profile that accurately portrays who we are. **The profile task group** is beginning work on the first part of this report—our history and who we are.
- **The administrative task group** is looking at how to address the current gaps in leadership within session and the congregation. In some areas we have insufficient leadership and in other committees the incumbent is ready to stand down.
- **The property development committee** continues to explore the potential for development of the Kirk Hall site.

Session approved elders for two important roles: Jean Marcellus will take over as Roll Clerk. Thanks were expressed to Jean for taking on this role and to Jim Ferguson who has maintained this important record over a number of years.

Brian Titus was approved as Presbytery Representative for St. Andrew’s. Brian will replace Sheelagh Garson who was the Presbytery Representative until her resignation as a Ruling Elder at the beginning of 2021. This position is an important link between the congregation of St. Andrew’s and the Presbytery of Vancouver Island. From the *Book of Forms*: The representative elder is responsible for:

114.7.1 Attending meetings of the presbytery, participation in its deliberations, and reporting to the

session the decisions, remits and referrals of the presbytery.

There are many ways that each of us can serve God. Due to the challenges of COVID we have developed new ways of doing things, and this has created a need for additional volunteers:

- Ushering for in-person worship (training will be provided).
- Assistance with sound and technology for live-streaming of worship in-person services. (training will be provided).
- Office assistance when we return to in-person worship, there will be additional tasks when there is both a virtual service and a live service. These are simple administrative tasks which can be done from home.

Perhaps there is something that you could offer to help with.

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Easter Blessings from Session!

Colina Titus,
Session Clerk

Presbyterian Connection is our Presbyterian Church in Canada newspaper. It is full of news items about our sister Presbyterian churches across Canada. It is free and you can subscribe by contacting the national office or go to presbyterian.ca/connection.

Some of the stories you will find inside are about our own St. Andrew’s, Victoria. On page 15 is an article about Share the Joy written by Debra Verwey and on page 24 there are photos from our music recital held in November 2020. Page 22 shows a photo of some of the Christmas lighting at St. Andrew’s, Nanaimo.

Undoubtedly in reading this quarterly newspaper, you will find *connections* with other Presbyterian churches you may have attended or have friends who attend.

There are some copies of this newspaper at the Kirk Hall if you would like to pick one up, or ask your elder to drop one off.

Mission & Outreach

JUSTICE AND THE *INDIAN ACT*

Most Canadians, in this post Truth and Reconciliation era, are aware of the long-lasting effects of the Residential Schools on our First Nations peoples. Not everyone knows about the piece of legislation that made the Schools a fixture of life for Indigenous children for so many years. This was and is the infamous *Indian Act*.

This *Act* of Parliament defines how the Government of Canada interacts with the 614 First Nations bands in Canada and their members. Wide-ranging in scope, covering governance, land use, healthcare, it says who is, and who is not an "Indian" (who has Indian status.) When first introduced in 1876, the *Act* aimed to eliminate First Nation culture in favour of assimilation into Euro-Canadian society. It has enabled trauma, human rights violations and social and cultural disruption for generations of Indigenous peoples.

Recently I came across ***21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act***, written by Bob Joseph. This small book is essential reading for anyone who seeks to understand the serious harm the *Indian Act* has caused... and continues to cause...Indigenous people today. I will lend my copy of this book to anyone who wants to read it.

The author, Bob Joseph, is an Indigenous person who is a member of the Gwawaenuk Nation (which is located between Comox and Port Hardy and the adjacent mainland of central coastal British



Bob Joseph

Columbia along Queen Charlotte Strait.) He founded Indigenous Corporate Training Incorporated in 1994, which works with all levels of government and business and individuals to build strong Indigenous relationships of awareness and engagement. Bob was an associate professor at Royal Roads University for several years.

This book started as a blog article that Bob wrote in 2015. He felt that the policies and statutes of the *Indian Act* were not common knowledge so he picked 21 of the *Act's* most destructive and cruel clauses to detail in his article. The immense response to the blog post convinced Bob of "the significance of the information and how knowing about the *Indian Act* could help people understand how it shaped the socio-economic and political reality of many generations of First Nations, and how it is the basis for many of today's stereotypes about First Nations."

After exposing the ramifications of the history of this *Act*, Bob Joseph explains, despite many amendments and modifications, it continues to negatively impact Indigenous communities today. He suggests ways that First Nations people can step out from under the *Indian Act* and return to self-government, self-determination and self-reliance, and why doing so would result in a better country for every Canadian.

In Micah 6:8 are the words: "What does the Lord require of you? **To act justly** and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God." Are we acting justly when Indigenous Canadians are second class citizens in their own country?

Debra Verwey
Mission & Outreach Committee

The photo of author, Bob Joseph, is reprinted with the kind permission of Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



Keeping our Promises - General Assembly

March 17, 2021

Dear Friends in The Presbyterian Church in Canada,

Sunday by Sunday, the church proclaims the sure and certain hope that is ours in Jesus Christ – that goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate, and life is stronger than death. Yet even as we prepare to celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death at Easter, we must acknowledge our own sin and turn our lives towards Jesus' way of compassion and grace. I write to you in this Season of Lent, with a deep awareness of the brokenness and division within our denomination. My particular concern at this time is the growing sense of fear and betrayal among those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Like others who follow the Revised Common Lectionary, I began this season by preaching about The Great Flood and God's covenant promise to never again destroy humanity and the world. I spoke about the rainbow, of course, God's own reminder of the promise and guarantee of God's gracious faithfulness going forward. Although we will never be as good as God is at keeping promises, we must strive to do so. And perhaps, just as God used the rainbow as a reminder of God's covenant, the church needs to be reminded of the promises that we have made to one another.

It was three years ago during the Season of Lent that the Moderator of the 2017 General Assembly, the Rev. Peter Bush, shared a Letter of Repentance for the church's homophobia and hypocrisy.¹ The letter was commissioned by the 2017 General Assembly as an interim response to these concerns, with the expectation that the Special Committee re: Listening (LGBTQI People) (Rainbow Communion) would bring recommendations to a future Assembly for concrete actions addressing these issues for implementation within the church.

With terms of reference set by the 2017 GA and revised by the 2018 GA, the Rainbow Communion implemented a listening process for LGBTQI people and others to tell their stories of harm done to them and/or God's grace experienced in the church.² Recognizing that the invitation to participate in the listening process could produce a high level of fear for LGBTQI people to tell their stories and reveal their identities, especially for those who are subject to the discipline of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the 2018 General Assembly adopted the following recommendation:

"That those who are subject to the discipline of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who accepted the invitation to serve on the Special Committee re Listening (LGBTQI People) or who accept the invitation to tell their stories... would have potential censure with respect to The Presbyterian Church in Canada's stance on same-sex relationships suspended indefinitely in order to allow them to participate freely and honestly in the work of the special committee." (A&P 2018, p. 29, 462.)

Individuals who have served on the Listening Committee or shared their stories are given a Letter of Certification as an attestation of the decision of the 2018 General Assembly. Those who have made themselves vulnerable by sharing openly and honestly in the listening process have a certificate in their

hand to remind them of the promise made to them by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is our responsibility, as the church, to remember and to keep that promise.

At the 2019 General Assembly, the Rainbow Communion's interim report indicated that "as people have found the courage to tell their stories it has become clear that the need for rebuilding broken communities and relationships and to respond pastorally to those who have been harmed cannot wait for another year."ⁱⁱⁱ The 2019 Assembly then adopted a number of recommendations including an encouragement to the church to find ways to give public expression to the Letter of Repentance and a commitment to develop and gather resources for those who have been harmed by these issues.^{iv}

The cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly due to Covid-19 has meant a delay in receiving the Final Report of the Rainbow Communion and further recommendations for concrete actions. It has undoubtedly been very difficult for those who continue to be personally impacted by hypocrisy, homophobia or harm directed towards LGBTQI people in the church as they wait even longer for the church to move our repentance from mere words in a letter to changes in the ways our communities welcome, care for, and receive the gifts of LGBTQI people. My fervent hope is that the 2021 Assembly will agree to address the important and urgent work of the church, including the Final Report of the Rainbow Communion.

Lent is a time for repentance. It begins with acknowledging our errors, as the Moderator's Letter of Repentance began to do three years ago. It continues with listening for the Spirit's guidance and turning in a new direction. I encourage the church to enact our repentance by giving public expression to the Letter of Repentance in our local contexts, by engaging with the resources being developed related to sexuality and inclusion in our church,^v and most urgently, by remembering and keeping the promise the church made to those who participated in the listening process.

As God has graciously kept covenant with us, may God give us the courage and compassion we need to keep our promises to one another.

In Christ,



Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

ⁱ Read the Moderator's Letter of Repentance here: <https://presbyterian.ca/2018/02/13/moderator-issues-letter-repentance-lgbtqi-community/>

ⁱⁱ Learn more about the Special Committee re: Listening (LGBTQI People) or Rainbow Communion here: <https://presbyterian.ca/listening/>

ⁱⁱⁱ A&P 2019, p. 486.

^{iv} A&P 2019, p. 19, 46, 486.

^v See <https://presbyterian.ca/sexuality/> for resources related to sexuality and inclusion in the church.

Hello Friends!

Last month I told you of the invitation from The Legislative Library Education Office for free educational programs offered over Zoom. Here are additional programs offered through The Parliamentary Education Office. These are all FREE of charge and you are welcome to join by booking with the Legislative Library.

Contact tours@leg.bc.ca for a Zoom booking. You can also register by telephone, 250-387-6668.

The upcoming Treasures from the Legislative Library Vault, being offered to BC residents are:

❖ Hansard Through The Ages:

Some of the earliest British parliamentary records: From 17th century pamphlets to live streams, learn about the contested history of parliamentary reporting. Wednesday, April 7, 2:00 pm 45 minutes

❖ The Politicians Bookshelf:

Annotated books belonging to early Canadian politicians: Get to know some of BC's founders from the rare books in their collection. Wednesday, June 23, 2:00 pm 45 minutes

❖ Documents Towards Democracy:

Take a trip into BC history, as told by ten remarkable items from the Library shelves. These include interesting topics such as early laws, signed petitions, treaty documents and more. Every Thursday at 2:00 pm 60 minutes, offered in April, September, and November.

These are great opportunities to learn more of BC history. I will let you know about upcoming programmes.

Remember to book early!

Dorothy Reimer,
Friendship Club

The following poem was inspired by the recent sale of scaffolding that St. Andrew's no longer needed and was quite cumbersome to store. Some scaffolding was kept for future projects.

**Gather round children and I'll tell you a tale,
of scaffolding bought and scaffolding sold.**

**With multiple projects on rooftops, walls and ceilings,
work couldn't be done from the ground looking up.**

**In 2015 scaffolding owners we became,
repair projects were begun.**

Lots was accomplished but more was planned.

**When repairs were started up again,
rules had changed.**

**Our scaffolding couldn't be used for the remaining
projects.**

Plans were revised and the projects completed,

but what to do now with the scaffolding stored?

A decision was made – find the scaffolding a new home!

Ads were placed,

**Some pieces set aside, for our own future, small
projects,**

**but most of the scaffolding was sold to a grateful young
man.**



**Storage areas were improved,
equipment was put to better
use**

**and St Andrew's Treasurer
received \$2360.00**

A success all around !

**Submitted by
Property Troubadour
(aka Sheelagh Garson)**

Mission & Outreach

PWS&D LENTEN FUNDRAISING

Thank you for your support of COVID-related work with Afghan and Rohingya refugees. Our donations will soon be administered through PWS&D and partners to help educate refugees on personal protection and ways of minimizing spread of the virus, and in practical help in these difficult times. How are refugees faring in their densely packed shelters, and crowded camps?

The UN reports that “[p]hysical distancing, handwashing with soap, wearing masks: these are some of the most basic, recommendations for slowing the spread of COVID-19, but for many refugees, and other displaced people, they can be very difficult to follow.” Also, “[t]hose sheltering in camps are highly likely to find themselves in close contact with their neighbours, whether they like it or not.”

Tragically, on top of their day-to-day suffering, news emerged in late March that a large fire broke out in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh. Close to a million Rohingya people live in one of the 34 camps in this small space. About 15 people died, but over 45,000 people lost what shelter they had, and their possessions. It is hard to imagine their continual suffering, with woe upon woe!

But in the same month as this sad news was distributed around the world, it was also reported by the WHO director for South-East Asia that, thankfully, the 34 camps in Cox's Bazaar have reported only 421 cases of COVID and 10 deaths over the 12 months that the first case was detected! (And there is evidence that the numbers are not under-reported.)

How can this be so when it is so counter-intuitive?! On top of Bangladesh's aggressive approach (commensurate to its economy and ability), and the hard work of aid agencies, some have attributed the low numbers from refugee camps around the world to a counter-intuitive factor: refugee camps, almost by definition, have relatively little flow of people in (except aid workers) and little flow out (because only a small number can find local employment) – and this creates the isolation that helps keep a community safe.

Time will tell – but as the WHO has indicated, there is still much hard work to be done by aid agencies to keep refugees safe, and vaccines are still some way off for their camps. Through PWS&D and their partners, we at St. Andrew's contribute to this important work.

Brian Titus
M&O Committee

Further reading:

Doctors Without Borders: Cox's Bazaar fire (24 March 2021) <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/article/coxs-bazar-bangladesh-fire-destroys-rohingya-refugee-shelters-and-msf-clinic>

UN News: Coping with COVID in refugee camps (6 Nov. 2020) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1076962>

WHO: COVID-19: The Fight Is Far From Over in Cox's Bazaar (9 March 2021) <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/covid-19-the-fight-is-far-from-over-in-coxs-bazar/>

Time: COVID-19 Outbreaks Are Now Emerging in Refugee Camps. Why Did it Take so Long For the Virus to Reach Them? (9 Oct 2020) <https://time.com/5893135/covid-19-refugee-camps/>

Congratulations!



Many of you will remember Martín Perez and Maribel Flores, who are a large part of our music programme at St. Andrew's.

Martín and Maribel have recently received Permanent Resident Status in Canada! Our congratulations go out to them, and may God continue to bless them.

Good News from Bev!

Beverley Higgins would like friends to know that her recent surgery was very successful. “After nine weeks of walking with walking sticks, I am now rejoining my friends in outings. The signs of spring also add to my joy.” Happy walking, Bev!

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Founded November 1863



Do you.....

Like jigsaw puzzles?

Dig into the past?

See order in chaos?

Love a good mystery?

Look at old photos & objects?

Conserve historic artifacts?



We have hundreds of vintage photos, documents, newspaper clippings, names, stories and memorabilia waiting to be sorted, conserved and added to the archives of St. Andrew's Church.

Our church archives tell the stories of God's faithfulness over the years.

Please join the archival team or lead the team for an unforgettable experience!



To find out more about this interesting opportunity, contact

Colina at session.clerk@standrewsvictoria.ca

THE CITY OF VICTORIA



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 9, 2021

Rev. Mitch Coggin
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
680 Courtney St
Victoria, BC V8W 1C1
Email: office@standrewsvictoria.ca

Dear Rev. Coggin,

On behalf of the City of Victoria, Council, staff and citizens, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to you and everyone at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church for opening your doors to provide emergency sheltering during the recent period of extreme weather.

It is a heartbreaking reality that people find themselves seeking shelter outside, and when temperatures plummet to levels below freezing this emergency situation becomes dire. As has been the case throughout the past year, when times are tough, we rely on our friends, family and our community for support.

While I can assure you that City staff and Council are working tirelessly with all levels of government to ensure everyone has access to the housing and social supports they need, we also are incredibly appreciative of efforts made by religious and community organizations to assist us in this cause. Building a thriving, compassionate community is truly a team effort and the importance of your selfless actions during the recent cold spell cannot be overstated.

Once again, thank you for your service to the community and for your continued dedication to helping those who require support throughout our city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lisa Helps'.

Lisa Helps
Victoria Mayor

The City of Victoria recognizes the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations in whose traditional territories we live and work "Hay swx qd"

He is Risen!

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."

Matthew 28: 5-6

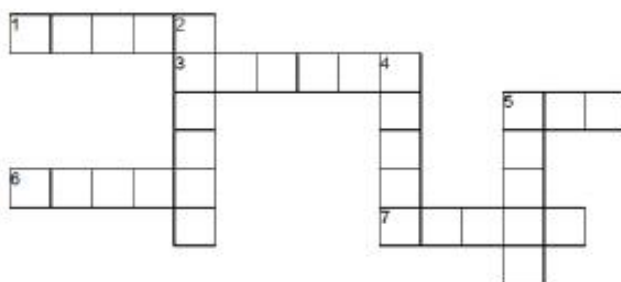


St. Andrew's Children's Page

Happy Easter

I've Just Seen Jesus

John 20: 1-28

**ACROSS**

1. The color of snow; the opposite of black
3. Messengers from heaven
5. To produce tears; to weep
6. Not dead
7. To have nothing inside

DOWN

2. The day we celebrate Jesus' resurrection
4. What was used to cover the entrance to Jesus' tomb
5. A piece of fabric made by weaving cotton, wool, or other fibers

EASTER	CLOTH	CRY	EMPTY
ALIVE	WHITE	STONE	ANGELS

