



THE LINK

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

December 2024

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As we approach Christmas, we see evidence of Christmas lights and displays and happy jolly Santas in the malls and stores. Christmas is truly a time for family get-togethers and buying presents and decorating the house. Tiny tots with their eyes all aglow....

However, despite all these distractions, it is important for us to remember the true meaning of Christmas. It is the celebration of Jesus' birth, the one who is the Saviour of the world. At St. Andrew's we look forward to singing Christmas carols and reading the Scriptures that tell the story of the nativity. We look forward to sharing the joy of Christmas with our fellow church-goers as we commence the season of Advent.

The editors of the Link want to share our hopes and prayers with you for a wonderful and meaningful Advent and Christmas.

Wishing you joy as we remember the miracle of Christ's birth this season. May the glory of our Saviour's birth fill your heart with peace and love this Christmas. May your Christmas be filled with the joy of Christ and His everlasting love.



Victoria, BC

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Session Clerk Report

Session was saddened to receive the resignations of both Rev. Mitch Coggin and Rev. Wayne Stretch effective February 28, 2025. As you read their letters, printed in full in the December *Link*, you will understand their reasons.

Presbytery will appoint a new Interim Moderator for St. Andrew's probably at their next meeting in January 2025.

Due to the Treasurer's medical challenges (similar to my own) the new budget will be presented a month later than usual. Session will receive the budget at its December meeting.

We have approved a congregational budget meeting, set for January 26th, after the worship service.

The Annual General Meeting has been postponed until March 9th.

The farewell to our minister and interim moderator is tentatively planned for February 23rd. This will be Rev. Coggin's and Rev. Stretch's last Sunday with us.

Communion will be on March 2nd.

Presbytery was informed of Rev. Laura Kavanagh's planned retirement date as August 31st. That leaves three of the four churches in greater Victoria without a pastor.

As presbytery representative for the congregation, I am

reporting that the Presbytery has been blessed with the arrival of two retired ministers. We have lost one minister on the appendix to the roll to a church in Aurora, Ontario, a congregation of similar size to ours. We should keep heart that the Lord will provide us a shepherd to lead us in the next phase of our existence.

Rev. Coggin will be on holidays starting the 25th of December for two weeks. We will welcome to the pulpit Rev. Wayne Stretch on Dec. 29th and Rev. Cathy Victor on January 5th.

We wish Mitch and Linda Coggin safe and uninterrupted travels to visit family in Texas and look forward to their return.

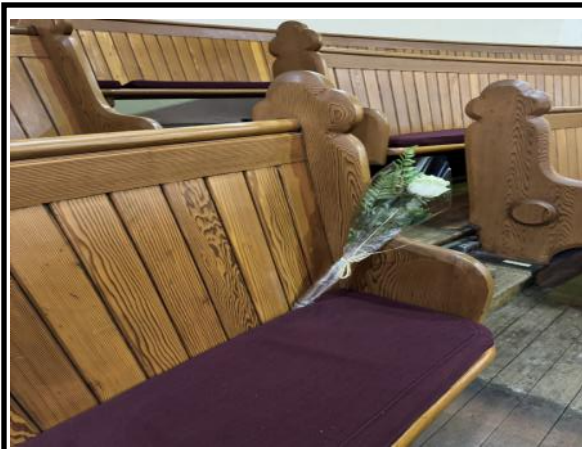
Jerry Verwey,
Session Clerk

Blue Christmas

Members of St. Andrew's are invited to worship with members of Trinity Presbyterian Church (2964 Tillicum Road) at a Blue Christmas Service on Sunday, December 15 at 2pm.

Join us in remembering the grief and losses of the year that make this season so difficult for many.

A quiet candle lighting will follow the service.

In Loving Memory

Ian MacLeod Baird - October 28, 2024

Full Circle

Months ago, the Activity Group asked for help to collect a variety of supplies that could be used to create new projects which would then be donated to Compassionate Resource Warehouse (CRW). CRW is an Island organization that works with many others to gather resources for international relief.

Over the past months we have reported about the hundreds of our completed items delivered to CRW. Many of these have already been packed and transported in shipping containers, to several countries. Recent shipping was delayed due to the Vancouver Port strike but containers will soon be on their way to Ukraine and other destinations.

Last week we delivered 53 "dignity bags" to CRW. These small, colourful cloth bags contain reusable menstrual pads to be given to girls as they mature so that they have the necessary supplies to be able to continue in school, no matter what the day of the month. Donations from the folks at St. Andrew's enabled us to create these bags and we are very grateful for the donations of materials - large and small. Before we delivered the bags we took a picture of some of them.

I've been asked if you need to be a talented seamstress to be part of the Activity Group. I assure you that you do not. Sewing skills are certainly very helpful and we have been blessed to have talented people as part of the group. There are, however, many small parts to all the projects. These parts do not require sewing skills and those who stop in on Thursday mornings have enjoyed a coffee and conversation, and also been able to help complete the projects.



Completed dignity bags.



Six double-sided receiving blankets with onesies.

We finished up this year with a request for donations of sewing supplies. Once again St. Andrew's response has been overwhelming.

Thank you to all the folks who searched their sewing supplies and then brought, or sent in, materials, yarns, knitting needles, threads, crochet and rug hooks, patterns, scissors and many, many other things that will help to complete sewing projects yet to be taught and created in far-away places. These donations will soon be delivered to CRW so that they can be readied for shipment.

As 2024 comes to an end, the Activity Group will take a short break over the busy Christmas season. We will meet on November 28th and December 5th, and will then pause until January 9th.

Sheelagh Garson

From Mitch

November 18, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am profoundly grateful for our work and life together over these six years. St. Andrew's is the Kirk That Faith Built. I have been inspired by your commitment to Jesus Christ and your dedication and leadership at St. Andrew's. The work has been challenging to say the least. Together you have faced the unknown, what might be, and what can be. Together you will continue to face those challenges as you decide, with the help and wisdom of God, what is next for you.

I recognize that the time has come to end my contract with St. Andrew's effective February 28, 2025. I can no longer effectively continue to lead you in the next phase of your discernment.

For now, Linda and I plan to remain in our home in Victoria. I plan to use March and April as a sabbatical to rest and reflect, something I have not experienced in 45 years of ministry. Then I plan to step back from full time ministry and be open for where God leads.

In the time that I have left with you, I want us to celebrate the remarkable people who make up St. Andrew's. I call you to continue the work of the collaborative conversations as they unfold that will be enable you to discern what is next for you. We will continue to try to answer who you are, who is your neighbour and who God calling you to be.

Sincerely,
Mitch

Rev. Coggin working from home

Currently there is no suitable room within the church facilities from which our minister can work.

The minister's current office is located on a major thoroughfare which provides access to the bathrooms and the Ballet Victoria dance space in the gym.

The door to the dance space is directly opposite the minister's office door—there is constant loud music from the gym and dancers chatting while they wait for classes. All of this disruption increases when there is preparation for a major production. This is not a space conducive to reading, writing and prayer. Neither is it suitable for pastoral conversations.

Given that we have rented space to the Ballet, and given the number of dancers going through the building each day, it is quite reasonable that there is a lot of movement, chatter and music. They are not unreasonable in their behaviour. What is not reasonable is that we expect our minister to work in the midst of this.

There is no other room suitable for the minister's office. This will need to be resolved before we call a new minister.

Until the end of his contract with St. Andrew's, Mitch will be working from home. He will continue to be available to meet with congregation and friends at their request at a mutually agreed location.

Thank you for your understanding.

Colina Titus,
Chair Personnel

Meditation Hour

As of October 23rd, Open Church and Meditation Hour have resumed. I have welcomed within that time frame up to 15 persons, both local and from away (Mexico, USA, Latin America). Meditation hour saw a number of persons coming in for quiet reflection as well as others seeking spiritual interactions and assurances.

The Church was open on both November 10 and 11 with Remembrance memorabilia on display, showing the role of this church in honouring our veterans.

Jerry Verwey
Open Church

Nicolas Kilhoffer Performance
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Victoria, BC
November 17, 2024



On Sunday, November 17, Nicolas Kilhoffer, a 22-year-old organist from Strasbourg, France gave an unforgettable performance featuring the works of French composers such as Cesar Franck, Maurice Durufle and Louis Vierne. His technical excellence and passionate playing wowed the more than 100 persons who attended the concert. The recent graduate from Strasbourg Conservatory is now considered an internationally recognized organist who has performed many concerts in the United States, Europe and Africa. The highlight of his performance at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was a ten-minute-long improvisation which Nicolas composed to embellish an unrehearsed piece of music that was handed to him in a brown manila envelope!

If you have an opportunity to attend any future concert given by this young man, be sure to take the advantage...you will not be disappointed!

Share the Joy of Christmas 2024

Every year St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church has a Share the Joy of Christmas campaign with the goal of making the holiday season brighter and more hopeful for people who are struggling financially in our community.

Christmas is meant to be a joyful and celebratory season. Unfortunately, for more and more families in these perilously expensive times, Christmas can be stressful. When you donate to St. Andrew's Share the Joy, you are making Christmas brighter for families, couples and singles in need.

All donations to "Share the Joy" are passed on to the local charity, Mustard Seed Street Church, which uses its contacts with local food distributors, to put together food hampers that will feed a family of four. Each hamper, full of a variety of food, including a turkey or grocery gift card, fresh produce, milk, eggs, bakery items, treats, and cereal, also contains a few special gifts for each child in the family that receives the basket. Adults are blessed with a few goodies like warm stockings, chocolates and a new toque along with the food. This way we try to touch each person's heart with the joy, peace and hope of the season.

On Sunday, November 24th, Janice James, Manager of Sponsorship and Community Relations at the Mustard Seed, spoke during our church service, telling us about its Food Bank and Food Security Distribution Centre and how the charity will be delivering 1200 Christmas hampers this December.



The Mission and Outreach Committee wants to encourage all the members and adherents of St. Andrew's to consider donating money to the Share the Joy of Christmas fundraiser. The need has never been greater.

You can make a donation by putting cash or a cheque in your regular church envelopes or by sending an e-transfer donation to treasurer@standrewsvictoria.ca. Please indicate that your donation is for ***Share the Joy***.

We are also collecting donations of socks. Please place any that you have to share in the donation box in the Gathering Room.

For more information, please contact the Mission and Outreach Committee, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, phone 250-384-5734 or office@standrewsvictoria.ca.

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2024
SHARE THE JOY



*This Christmas,
help feed hungry
people in Victoria!*

Our financial donations will help The Mustard Seed Church distribute 1200 Christmas hampers.

CASH DONATIONS

Put your cash or cheque in a regular donation envelope during Sunday Services.

E-TRANSFER DONATIONS

Please send your donation to treasurer@standrewsvictoria.ca

Please indicate all donations are for 'Share the Joy'.



WARM TOES

This year we are also collecting donations of socks! Please place them in the donation bin in The Gathering Room.

**ST. ANDREW'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S
MISSION & OUTREACH**

250-384-5734
office@standrewsvictoria.ca





Sunday, November 10, UVIC School of Music Cello students from the studio of Pam Highbaugh-Aloni performed in St. Andrew's Sanctuary. Chamber groups were also in performance.





Sunday, November 24, UVIC students from the Violin class of Ann Elliott-Goldschmid performed individual and chamber group selections in St. Andrews's beautiful Sanctuary.



ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S
MUSIC OUTREACH PROGRAM PRESENTS

VIOLA & CHAMBER RECITAL

DECEMBER 1
AT 2:00 PM

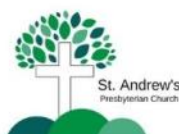
**DONATIONS
APPRECIATED**

Support our music program and
young musicians!

*Featuring the wonderful
Viola students and
Chamber groups from the
class of Joanna Hood,
Associate Professor at
UVIC's School of Music,
and Lafayette Quartet
member.*

FREE PARKING
Sundays and holidays
745 Broughton Parkade

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
924 DOUGLAS STREET
250-384-5734
office@standrewsvictoria.ca
www.standrewsvictoria.ca





Joint Knox and St. Andrew's Worship Service November 10, 2024 at Knox Presbyterian, Victoria



November 24, 2024 - Daniel Gichimu preaching at St. Andrew's.



Elizabeth Gichimu with her parents, Daniel and Margaret. Daniel and Margaret will be going home to Kenya in early December, but hope to return soon.

Property Committee Report

At a congregational meeting on October 27, the property committee sought approval to use church reserve money to apply for two heritage grants available from the City of Victoria, in order to stabilize the parapets on and around our church tower. The first grant available to a maximum of \$200,000, relies on 25% participation by the congregation. The second grant requires 50% participation by the congregation, to secure up to a maximum of \$100,000. This money will also assist with the re-pointing of the tower bricks. The rationale for working on these together is to save money on the required scaffolding, which is always a substantial cost of any project.

The Treasurer assured the congregation, that with expected bequests, there would be minimal drawdown on the reserves.

The proposal put forward was readily approved by the attending congregation allowing the property committee to go forward with the applications.

Jerry Verwey
Property Committee

ACTIVITY GROUP



THURSDAYS IN THE GATHERING ROOM
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

- Join us for tea, coffee, a visit, and conversation.
- Help with ongoing outreach projects.
- Bring a friend or make a new one.
- All are welcome!

GAME DAY

Join us on the first Thursday of every month to play table top games!

For more information contact Sheelagh Garson at 250-385-5157



ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
924 DOUGLAS STREET
250-384-5734



Letter from Rev. Wayne Stretch

Dear Friends,

After much thought, prayer, and gratitude to God, I am writing this letter to inform you that I have notified the Clerk of Presbytery of my desire to resign as Interim Moderator of St. Andrew's, effective the end of February, 2025.

I'm aware, too, that you are also receiving a letter from Mitch Coggin this evening, expressing his intention to conclude his time of ministry among us.

While our decisions are made independently and for our own separate reasons, it has been a very special privilege to have served together with Mitch at St. Andrew's. I am thankful, always, for his personal warmth, his friendship and his spiritual example, just as I have been encouraged in our partnership by his generosity in leadership.

During my 3 plus years as Interim Moderator there have been challenging times - burdens that we all have borne together. There have been times, too, of real blessings and breakthroughs. In our sometimes challenging walk together with our sibling church at Knox, God has been opening doors for us along the journey... and also opening our hearts one to another. I believe He is leading us to a time of decision making regarding our next steps. There is a careful, prayerful urgency to those in our mission-seeking together.

For personal reasons, including some important issues facing our extended family, I must lay my portion of that burden down. In doing so, please know that I have nurtured the special spot in my heart that I have for St. Andrew's. I will watch, listen and pray for your well-being as you venture together... with God... into the future He has planned for you!

Blessings in Christ,
Wayne

Coming Soon..... Next Steps

On November 3, many of you attended the meeting following the worship service. This was an opportunity to circulate through four table groups to ask questions related to key topics:

- ❖ **Vision Mission Timeline** - Mitch provided a summary on what we have done over the last six years that bring us to today.
- ❖ **Congregation's demographics** – Review of estimates of declining membership over recent years, current number of regular attendees at worship, numbers of people in different age groups, numbers of current leaders and volunteers needed for current activities, and projections into the future.
- ❖ **Finances** – Balance sheet, current financial health/concerns, how church expenses are covered.
- ❖ **Session progress over the past 6 months** - Knox and St. Andrew's shared data from each congregation and listed what we have in common. Planned shared worship for "Worship in the Park" in August, shared worship at St. Andrew's on October 6 and shared worship at Knox Presbyterian on November 10. St. Andrew's session developed a draft set of core values:
 - Spiritual growth and formation;
 - Worship and music;
 - Mission and outreach.

What next?

Quite reasonably, some of you may still have unanswered questions.

We will be offering further opportunities for discussion and questions, following which you will receive a report on the input and ideas offered. Topics will include:

- What are the core values of our congregation? What are the core values of the Knox congregation? Are they significantly different? In what ways do they blend, or differ?
- What are the implications of our decisions for the future, specifically whether we merge or don't merge with the congregation of Knox, Victoria?

Meetings, both in person and by Zoom, will be scheduled very early in January. The intent is that the congregation will develop a clearer understanding of both St. Andrew's and Knox, the implications of merging (or not), and be ready and able to vote by the end of January on whether God is leading us to merge with Knox Presbyterian as the next step in ministry together.

We should not delay our decision as Wayne and Mitch are both retiring at the end of February, and we cannot begin the call process for a new minister until we know whether the call will be to St. Andrew's, or jointly to Knox and St. Andrew's.

Details of up-coming meeting dates and the voting process will follow. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to ask questions of any elder or our treasurer, Jack Reimer. If you have not seen the information handouts from the table sessions of Nov. 3rd, we have copies available.

**Mitch, Wayne, Jean, Patti,
Brian, Jack and Colina**

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S
MUSIC OUTREACH PROGRAM PRESENTS

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC

**THURSDAY
DECEMBER 12
AT 12:00 NOON**



**A CHRISTMAS CAROL
SING ALONG!**

*Christine Purvis, organ,
with special guests:*

*David Barss, trumpet
Eva Smith, soprano
Mahtab Saadatmand, cello*



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St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church — December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Choir 9:30 Worship 10:30 - Communion Coffee Hour Viola & Chamber Recital - 2pm	2 	3	4 Zoom Prayer Meeting Open Church 11:30 - 1:30 Meditation 4:00-5:30	5 Activity Group 10:30 Choir Practice 7:15	6	7
8 Choir 9:30 Worship Coffee Hour	9 Session Meeting (hybrid) -7pm	10	11 Open Church 11:30 - 1:30 Meditation 4:00-5:30	12 Gift of Christmas Music - 12pm Choir Practice 7:15 	13	14
15 Choir 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee Hour Blue Christmas - Trinity 2pm	16	17	18 Open Church 11:30 - 1:30 Meditation 4:00-5:30	19 Choir Practice 7:15	20 	21
22 Choir 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee Hour	23 	24 Christmas Eve Worship - 7pm 	25 Merry Christmas! 	26 No Choir Practice	27	28
29 Choir 9:30 Worship 10:30 Coffee Hour Link Deadline	30	31	Jan. 1, 2025 Happy New Year! 	Jan. 2, 2025 No Choir Practice	Jan. 3, 2025	Jan. 4, 2025

If you would like additions, updates or changes to this calendar, please submit that information to theink@shaw.ca