

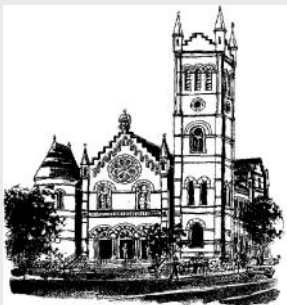


# THE LINK

## St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

March 2025

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Victoria, BC

### A Final Word from Rev. Mitch Coggin...

Friends, thank you! For the remarkable celebration today with a meal, stories, a reunion of St. Andrew's friends and family, which followed a worship service with holy communion, a guest reader all the way from Calgary (Welcome home Chris Lindsey!) and remarkable music as usual.

Thanks to all who planned, prepared and served, and to those who made today a grand day of blessing and send off. Linda and I are truly grateful to each of you for your kindness. The cards, letters, gifts and goodies made us laugh and made us cry. Thanks to each of you!

I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippian church that mirrors my prayer for you in the coming days, knowing that you are in God's hands and that God will guide you. Paul wrote...

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

My prayer for you as well begins with gratitude:

- For the 20 elders with whom I have served and who have served you over these years.
- For the two Interim Moderators, Vincent Tan and Wayne Stretch, who have been colleagues in ministry, and partners in our mutual ministry together.
- For Christine Purvis for her dedication, diligence, heart and friendship, that she has brought to our mutual work of worship over these years. Through Lent, Advent, Pentecost, Ordinary Time and all other seasons! Thank you, Christine from the bottom of my heart.
- For the St. Andrew's staff that have worked in collaboration and friendship ... thank you, Grant Shepard, Whitney Hanna and Shannon Cummings, and Martin Perez! Each of you have brought dedication and determination to our work pre-COVID, during COVID and post-COVID.
- For the committees, task forces, Committee Chairs, and Volunteers! For all who worked on the front lines and those who worked behind the scenes. Each of you are a treasure!

I offer my hopes and prayers for you in the coming days as Rev. Dale Woods, Presbyterian of Mission and Vision in Presbytery of the Westminster, guides you in significant conversations during March and April that will assist you in clarifying your

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## Session Report - February 2025

To meet the time demands of our new interim Moderator, Rev Laura Kavanagh, session has decided to hold our meetings on the second Monday of each month. This clears up any potential holiday conflicts such as Easter Monday and Victoria Day.

As arranged earlier, Session met with Rev. Dale Woods, who was appointed by Presbytery to conduct an exploration of ministry vitalities, which we hope will lead to completion of our congregational profile.

This first meeting was to find out the background of those leading the congregation, namely the elders, and their involvement in the congregation. We learned that there are four ways for a congregation to grow: spiritually, organizationally, missionally, and rationally, all hopefully leading to numerically. It is often the missional from the spiritual that impacts the numerical. The challenge being that we spiritually focus on those present thus it becomes inward focused rather than outward focused, thus not adding numerically.

We need to get the entire congregation involved in the vision to make it theirs not just session's. Rev. Woods then produced a process that he will follow with the congregation at a number of meetings to discern what the congregation wishes the vision to be and to discern if we collectively have a passion for that. Those that have a passion for a certain thing will rarely burnout, but if the passion is lacking, then what we do individually becomes a burden on that person and burnout is around the corner.

Have we burned out? I know my passion is more for the technical aspects such as the AV system and building maintenance. Not so much as visitation. Some love to visit and connect with others. Once we know what our vision and passion is, we can call a minister compatible with our vision and he or she will know that they have the wholehearted backing with the vision going forward. As of this writing, actual dates to meet have not been finalized, but Rev. Woods hopes to complete the process by the end of April with a planned profile completion in time for the June Presbytery meeting.

Session was dismayed to receive the resignation of our organist, Christine Purvis, with Easter Sunday being her last day. Christine and her husband are moving closer to family in Langley. They have secured housing there. There will be chance for the congregation to thank Christine for her many years of service. Planning for

this is underway. Also a group is being assembled to search for a replacement organist.

Our transitional pastor, Rev. Mitch Coggin, expressed his appreciation for the years and the people he has served with and his love for the congregation. Rev. Stretch, our interim moderator, also expressed his appreciation of working with us as a congregation. Both ministers spoke of their desire for our success in the future.

**Jerry Verwey**  
Session Clerk

### For a New Beginning

by John O'Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.  
For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.  
It watched you play with the seduction of safety  
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,  
Wondered would you always live like this.  
Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,  
A path of plenitude opening before you.  
Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.  
Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

(Continued from page 1)

future ministry and the kind of person that God may send for pastoral leadership.

My hopes and prayers continue that Session, and the Property Committee will finally clarify next steps for the office area and especially the Minister's Office that long ago became a place in which meetings, counseling and contemplative work are impossible to conduct there due to the noise from Kirk Hall. A gracious thank you to the Personnel Committee for a recent assessment of the office which concurred that the Minister's Office must be moved before a new minister would be able to do significant work in Kirk Hall. I pray this oversight will finally be addressed.

Finally, from a recent sermon, I quoted from Bishop Marianne Budde's book, *Finding Courage in the Face of Injustice*, clarifies Jesus' call to act,

*When the decisive moment comes in the midst of a whirlwind and we are called to act, we need to do so trusting less in ourselves than in the power and the energy that is compelling us forward... When the moment comes to you and to me to be brave in some way, we do so trusting less in ourselves and more in the spirit that is driving us... but what a relief to meet God in the moment of change.*

May each of you as well continue to meet God in the significant moments of change yet ahead.

Grace and peace to each of you as you remain faithful to God's hope for St. Andrew's.

Blessings and Love  
**Rev. Mitch Coggin**

## Rev. Wayne Stretch Retires

On Sunday, February 9, Rev. Wayne Stretch retired as the Interim Moderator at St. Andrew's, a position that he held for three years. The congregation thanked Wayne for his service and wished him and his wife, Lynn, all the best in the coming years.



## Lenten Reader

Lent is a journey. Traditionally, these 40 days before Easter are a time of self-examination, letting go of the old, and preparing ourselves for something new.

Over the last three years Linda Coggin has encouraged us to share our faith through brief reflections that are a source of inspiration and encouragement during the season of Lent. Although she will not be here during Lent, the Christian Education Committee hopes to compile reflections into a Lenten Reader for 2025.

Henri Nouwen writes,

*When we are rooted in prayer and solitude and part of a community of faith...the books we read, the nature we enjoy, the people we meet, and the events we experience contain within themselves signs of God's presence and guidance day by day.*

In that spirit, we invite you to share a story, a scripture, an experience that has shaped your life of faith. This might be something you do regularly like taking a walk, gardening, or a life changing circumstance that has taught you about God's presence or provision in our everyday lives. We aren't asking for perfection, we are asking you to share a bit of your unique faith journey.

We will create a *Lenten Reader* for all to use during Lent. Describe your experience in any way that you choose: a description, an example, a story, a song, poem, or artwork (photo or drawing). There is not a specific format, just a few guidelines:

Suggested length for the submission is ½ to 1 typed page (handwritten is accepted!)

**Please submit by Wednesday, March 5, 2025**

Send to [steetzel@telus.net](mailto:steetzel@telus.net) or [office@standrewsvictoria.ca](mailto:office@standrewsvictoria.ca)

If you have a question or need assistance in ANY way please contact Sabine Teetzel by email [steetzel@telus.net](mailto:steetzel@telus.net) or phone 250-896-7495. I am looking forward to putting your submission into the Lenten Reader.

## Celebrate our Choral Scholars on April 6th



l to r:  
Eva Smith, Darby Howard, Dylan Syrnyk, Noah Mellemstrand

Over the past three years we have been most fortunate to have gathered together four young music students/scholars to participate and contribute to our limited volunteer choir. They each play a major part in our music program at St. Andrew's and they enhance our Worship services. We are most grateful for their gift of music and their leadership in our choir.

To help you get to know our scholars better, we will publish a photo and bio of each one in the April *Link*. More importantly on April 6, after Worship, we will have a cake and celebration event for three of the four who have graduated or will be graduating this spring from UVIC. Please stay tuned for more information about their graduation recitals at the university. These recitals are open to the public.



Communion Quartet at practice



**Guitar Concert at St. Andrew's**

Students from the class of Simon Farintosh, guitar professor at UVic School of Music, performed in the sanctuary at St. Andrew's on February 9. The repertoire included many classical pieces and several original pieces composed by the individual students.

Simon (in center of the photo) was reacquainted with his Grade 1 teacher, Patricia Shuckburgh, who was volunteering at the concert as an usher. Patricia frequently played her guitar in Simon's Grade 1 class. Perhaps this is where he got his inspiration to be a musical professor!

**So you know....**

**Shannon Cummings**, St. Andrew's Church Administrator, and **Jean Marcellus**, chair of Communications, will be monitoring Rev. Mitch's old email address:

[pastor@standrewsvictoria.ca](mailto:pastor@standrewsvictoria.ca)

during the time there is no full-time pastoral leader at St. Andrew's.

Rev. Mitch Coggin's permanent email address, now that he is retired will be:

[MitchCoggin56@gmail.com](mailto:MitchCoggin56@gmail.com)

His cell number may be obtained by phoning the office.

**Don't forget to set your clocks forward an hour, before you go to bed on Saturday, March 8!**

**Daylight Savings Time starts on Sunday, March 9.**

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

# Spring Concerts

**BRASS CONCERT**  
**MARCH 16 AT 2:00 PM**  
 Featuring 'Junebug Brass', a UVic brass quintet with trumpets, french horn, and tenor and bass trombone!

**CELLO CONCERT**  
**MARCH 23 AT 2:00 PM**  
 Featuring cello students from the class of Pam Highbaugh Aloni, Associate Professor at UVic's School of Music.

**CHAMBER CONCERT**  
**MARCH 30 AT 2:00 PM**  
 Featuring music students from the class of Joanna Hood, Associate Professor at UVic's School of Music.

**ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
 924 Douglas Street  
 250-384-5734  
[office@standrewsvictoria.ca](mailto:office@standrewsvictoria.ca)  
[www.standrewsvictoria.ca](http://www.standrewsvictoria.ca)

**DONATIONS APPRECIATED**  
 Support our music program and young musicians!

**FREE PARKING**  
 Sundays and holidays  
 745 Broughton Parkade next to the Greater Victoria Public Library.

## **My recollection of Mitch Coggin...**

St. Andrew's had gone through a number of upsetting changes at the time and we had the opportunity to invite a 'transitional minister' to our midst to help us maneuver through change.

The concept of a minister assigned with the task of helping us with change appealed to me. I witnessed changes within other organizations I either worked (rather employed by) or belonged to.

It was announced a 'transitional minister' was visiting Victoria, and if any members of the congregation were interested in meeting him, he would be available to chat in the small meeting room.

Of course, when I heard he was from Alabama, I immediately took off my rose-coloured glasses and replaced them with my industrial grade myopic limited view of the world and imagined a red-neck southerner who was going to have us sing with arms raised and hallelujah chorus – by the way, certainly not the one written by Leonard Cohen.

It was a pleasant surprise at my first meeting with Mitch. He was not a red-hat rebel, but someone who spoke quietly and passionately about his work. My question to Mitch was to ask his response to what we used to refer to as 'alternative life style' people – i.e. gay and his response basically was – we are all equal in the eyes of God. That was all I needed to hear.

Within the Presbyterian Church we have had some struggles and some discord, in particular as it relates to people of alternative lifestyle and it may still be an issue today, although perhaps unspoken.

At St. Andrew's we have adopted an accepting attitude towards people of all sexuality.

I mention this as it directly affects me and my family. My granddaughter, Maia, came to visit me one summer and as soon as she arrived at my apartment, she asked

the question "Grampa, if I told you I like girls the same way I like boys, what would your response be?" My answer to Maia was, "Maia, if your Dad or Auntie asked me the same question, my response would be 'I would still love them, without regard to their sexual orientation or preference' ". Maia breathed a sigh of relief and I could see her relax.

This brings me to the Pride Parade in July last year. Patti asked me to help with some presence at the Pride Parade. We had to scramble a bit but we were able to set up a watering station for people to refill their water bottles, large cups of water for others and a cool spray water bottle for both pets and their handlers.

My grandchildren were visiting at the time. I offered to join them at the Pride event and I was prepared to walk with Maia in the parade. When faced with the opportunity to be present and help out at the watering station, Maia stepped forward to help staff the watering station. She came decked out in her colourful hair and teenage clothing.

Why do I tell this story?

It brings me back to my original comment about the question I put to Mitch before he arrived at St. Andrew's. Although the transition from what we had (some might say a cloistered environment) to where we are today as an open and inclusive church, can be attributed to the leadership demonstrated by Mitch, perhaps this transition from what we were to what we could be is not complete. But Mitch has certainly helped us on the path.

For this I say thank you, my friend – Pastor Mitch Coggin.

**Jim Ferguson**



*With flock of paper doves!*

### Rev. Mitch's Last Communion Service at St. Andrew's



*Chris Lindsey came from Calgary for Mitch's last service.*

### Retirement Celebration for Rev. Mitch, February 23, 2025







VANCOUVER ISLAND PRESBYTERY'S  
**WOMEN'S RETREAT**



**Camp Imadene**

April 25-27, 2025

Located on beautiful Lake Mesachie, Camp Imadene is the perfect setting for a weekend away. There will be time to play (puzzles, canoes, hot tub, movie night and more) and times to rest and relax. We will enjoy worshipping together as we connect with each other, ourselves, and with Jesus.

**Register before March 16 for \$230!**

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/29ndlyoy>

Rev. Dr. Mona will be speaking about our daily habits. How do we make good habits? How do we keep good habits? Do our habits honour God? We will hear from Mona throughout the weekend about how we can form holy habits.

**For more information please contact**

**Camp Registrar Meredith Reems**

(250) 668 3299

[vipladiesretreat@gmail.com](mailto:vipladiesretreat@gmail.com)

Registration Forms for the Vancouver Island Presbytery's Women's Retreat are available on the table in the hallway outside the church office in the Kirk Hall.



### 2025 Vancouver Island Presbytery Summer Camps

(A program of the Presbyterian Church in Canada)

Location and Dates:

Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Park June 9th-13th

Goldstream Provincial Park July 3rd-7th

Rathrevor Provincial Park August 11th-18th

For Enquiry Contact: Camp VIP  
registrar.jermareng@outlook.com

Camp Website <https://vipresbytery.net>

### Items Needed to Help Others!

Thanks to your many donations, St. Andrew's Activity Group has created and delivered hundreds of items which will improve people's lives around the world.

Our projects are ongoing so we continue to need new and gently used flannelette material and new and gently used towels. Drop off your donations to the church office or bring them to the Gathering Room on Thursday mornings.

**Sheelagh Garson**

### AV Team Update

As with all things digital, updates sometimes upset the whole apple-cart. The update on one program does not interface with the existing program and the whole thing collapses. That is what occurred on Sunday, February 16 when the AV team could not live stream our Sunday morning service. I believe this happened after a Microsoft update.

After an anguishing week of trying various ways to get our live stream back, a middle of the night eureka solution occurred. We put it in place on Saturday morning and success! Both the camera recognition by the program as well as the live stream component were in use again.

Unfortunately the menu section we rely on was lost and needed to be reapplied, a time consuming process, completed by 11 on Saturday with plenty of time for the Sunday service.

Thanks for the assistance from Steve Sturgess, Knox live stream team leader.

**Jerry Verwey**  
AV Team

### First Aid Kits

We will be updating St. Andrew's First Aid kits on some Thursdays this spring. You can help with this activity by joining us and/or by donating first aid supplies you may have.



If you have any sterile, packaged dressings, gauze pads, bandaids or tweezers, please bring them to the church office. We will use them in our kits or send them to Third World countries through the Compassionate Resource Warehouse.

**Dorothy Reimer**