



THE LINK

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

January 2026

Epiphany and the Power of New Beginnings

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As we move into 2026 in the Church calendar, we move into the season of Epiphany. We move from a season of reflecting on the past, and move into a season of taking action. We are invited to push beyond all the old rules and all the expectations of what can and can't be - what should and should not be.

We're invited to acknowledge our fears. It's important we do that ... but we're invited even more urgently to push past them and to imagine what it might mean to live in the light of the Christmas Star. The star that led the Magi to new and unexpected places.

Business writer Rosabeth Moss Kanter has written, "Success and failure are not events. They are trajectories."

That's true of New Year's resolutions, too. More deeply, it's true of God's engagement with us, and with all creation. It's not just an event; it is a trajectory.

Did the Magi, King Herod and, all Jerusalem, begin to see a new trajectory, as they looked out in the night sky and saw a new star blazing just above them?

That star was on a trajectory so broad, it was on none of their maps. And it showed them, to their astonishment, God's vision for creation is on a trajectory so wide open, what we think we know, and what we think we understand about how things work, is just the beginning of what's out there. There is so much more in store for us.

When Herod saw that star, all he could manage to see was bad news. But the point is ... it's good news. Truth be told, it's the greatest news there is!

Epiphany reminds us, we live our lives in a new light. Epiphany reminds us, Jesus, the light of the world, has arrived in all his rule-breaking, table-turning glory, helping us to see all things, and even ourselves, in new ways.

For the broken-hearted, and the broken down, and the plain, old flat broke - for all the ways brokenness in all its forms can shrink our world until it has no room for anything but pain and worry - the light of that new star reveals a path ... a path back to the world.

For the victims of injustice and oppression, the victims of those subtle and the not-so-subtle exclusions that some know all too well, the light of that new star is a reminder, as the old song says, "*change is gonna come.*"

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Victoria, BC

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It's Organ Tuning Time ...

Twice a year Jason Barnsley travels from Calgary to Victoria to tune the real pipes of the St. Andrew's organ (our organ also has digital pipes!). Think of it like bringing your car to the dealer/mechanic to have it checked out to see what needs fixing or adjusting! There's usually a pre-Christmas tuning and a late spring tuning as that's when the metal and wooden pipes adjust to the changing humidity in the sanctuary with the weather changing. It's always a total guessing game whether the pipes will stay in tune or not, especially the metal ones that mimic instrumental brass (trumpet, tuba) or reeds sounds (oboe).

Did you know that a 7-year apprenticeship is required to become a fully qualified organ tuner? Yes, it takes this long to learn the ins and outs of how to tune a rank (set) of pipes ranging from 32 feet to 2 inches in length made of different materials (metal or wood) and many, many more skills, such as fixing a cipherring note (pipe keeps sounding forever) and dead notes (pipe doesn't speak at all). When tuning, the organ tuner is literally inside the "innards" of the organ chamber which is usually really cramped. And at St. Andrew's there are over 2000 pipes to look after!

But it actually takes two people to tune the organ. First, the person sitting at the console pulls the stop which sets up a slider underneath the 61 pipes of a rank on the manuals or 30 pipes for the pedal to line up with the toe/bottom part of the pipe for the air go in and make it sound. Second, the assistant (this is called "holding the keys") plays each note on the manual or pedal that connects to that particular pipe, and the organ tuner checks whether it's in tune. The most stable set of pipes (rank) on an organ is the called the "Principal 4-foot". This is a set of metal pipes 4-feet in length which serves as a reference to all other stops on the organ. The first pipe the organ tuner checks is the famous "A" at 440 Hz everybody normally tunes to in North America.

This A above middle C on the St. Andrew's organ sits currently a bit lower at 437.8 Hz: this is totally fine, but it means if I accompany another instrument on the organ, the player will have to adjust their tuning to the A from the organ, so our sounds match. For you science lovers out there: the tuner checks whether each pipe "howls" (called a wolf) to fix a bad, resonant note that creates a poor sympathetic vibration. If you've ever listened to a set of bag pipes getting going until they are finally in tune, that's what you'll hear when the trumpet or tuba stops are being tuned and a pipe is out of tune. And yes, it can sometimes take up to a minute to make the "wolf howling" disappear!

If you want to read a bit more about the St. Andrew's organ, please click on the link below:
<https://www.standrewsvictoria.ca/music/the-organ> at your leisure.

Susanne Reul-Zastre

(Continued from page 1)

For those who are afraid to attempt new things - too afraid of who might see, too afraid of who might laugh, too afraid of the smirk and the sarcastic comment or the raised eyebrow ... the light of that star reveals a gallery of other faces, eager to cheer, eager to help, and eager to undertake the journey, too. We are not alone.

So, if we're feeling hesitant or stuck in old patterns, the Season of Epiphany is a time to consciously choose a new trajectory in life, breaking away from familiar routines and expectations. May the light of the Christmas Star guide us all toward healing, inclusion and positive change.

Rev. Wes Denyer



Warm Toes 2025

Thank you to everyone who donated socks to our warm toes campaign. The collected socks were delivered to the Mustard Seed Street Church the day before Christmas. They were most appreciated and are always needed!

Patti Jackson
Mission & Outreach

Share the Joy of Christmas Campaign 2025

Every year the congregation and adherents of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church donate money to the Share the Joy of Christmas campaign with the goal of making the holiday season brighter and more hopeful for persons who are struggling financially in the Greater Victoria area. We pass along the donations that we receive to the Mustard Seed Street Church who run a food bank and have the connections to really stretch the money to fill Christmas baskets with nutritious food and small gifts for needy families who live near us. Our Share the Joy of Christmas campaign runs through the Advent season.



Our donations amounted to \$1250, as of December 16th, which was enough money to feed many needy families and individuals. We are still receiving donations. Thank you very much everyone at St. Andrew's for your generosity!

Debra Verwey

In 2024 the Activity Group had a request from The Compassionate Resource Warehouse to make menstrual supplies for young girls. Our group came up with the idea of making Dignity Bags. We designed the holders and started sewing. Each drawstring bag has two cotton fabric holders and six flannelette squares. The bag is about 12 inches by 15 inches made from cotton material. The Compassionate Resource Warehouse gives us some material and members of the congregation have also donated material and ribbon. While I am not able to go to the weekly meetings, I continue to sew at home. Evelyn Houston, who also can no longer get out to the meetings, has been a great help, turning the squares ready for me to top stitch. When I have enough holders, squares and bags made, she and I put the bags together. My daughter supplies us with big cardboard boxes from her work place and we get 50 dignity bags in a box. I take the filled box over to the CRW when they are ready for them. The boxes are shipped mostly to African countries, but the last box went to an orphanage in the Ukraine. In 2025 we sent 300 dignity bags overseas. Some of us have also sewn baby receiving blankets, knitted lap blankets and donated newborn size sleepers for the CRW.



Jean Watt

December 11th - Gift of Christmas Music



Smiling greeters: Deb Verwey, Patti Jackson & Patricia Shuckburgh



Kathie Wilson & Trudy Radlmeier



Emcees: Dylan Syrnyk and Darby Howard



Mary Byrne, Flute



Organist: Susanne Reul-Zastre

Year End Session Report 2025

In the past year, our congregation and session have said goodbye to many things. Our Transitional Pastor, Rev. Mitch Coggin, retired at the end of February after many years of guiding us through our search for a mission, the rigours of COVID and our collaboration initiatives with other Presbyterian churches in the Victoria area.

We said goodbye to Rev. Wayne Stretch, our Presbytery appointed Interim Moderator, who supported both Rev. Coggin and the congregation and who also retired at the end of February.

We welcomed Interim Moderator, the Rev. Laura Kavanagh, who guided us through the final stages of our Church profile and the approval of that profile by Vancouver Island Presbytery. Laura announced her retirement both as interim moderator of this congregation and as minister of Knox at the end of August.

We then welcomed our new Interim Moderator, the Rev. Irwin Cunningham from Saanich Peninsula Presbyterian, a church plant from this congregation many years ago.

It was not only ministers the session said goodbye to. We said goodbye to a number of elders who retired due to health concerns, one of which we said our final goodbye to shortly after her retirement. Last year at this time the session numbered 12 elders, now we number 9. We welcomed back two elders who were on leave of absence due to personal situations.

Our long-time organist and music director, Christine Purvis, retired in April and moved to the mainland to be nearer to family. Since then, we welcomed our new Director of Music and organist, Susanne Reul-Zastre.

Jim Ferguson took up the challenge of organizing and chairing the search committee for our next minister. This committee has since been fleshed out by a number of members of the congregation and is in the early stages of searching for our next minister under the guidance of our Interim Moderator.

We welcomed the Rev. Wes Denyer, who is a recent retiree from Toronto, to fill our pulpit on a consistent basis. He was subsequently contracted to perform more than Sunday supply. He has taken on pastoral visitation for St. Andrew's congregation.

Moira Bernard has resigned as our worship reader coordinator. Session sincerely appreciates the hard work

Moira has done in supplying a steady stream of readers for many years. We wish her the best in the future and her continued participation in our congregation. If you are interested in helping with the coordination of worship readers, please contact the office.

All in all, the Lord's blessings on our congregation have been numerous. As the new year begins, we still have many challenges ahead of us. Session is looking to add to our numbers as nine members does not allow us to cover and support the many activities within our congregation. Session has combined a number of committees. This does not eliminate the work of the individual committees but gives a consistent reporting structure so that none will be left out.

In the new year, St Andrew's has been asked to host Vancouver Island Presbytery in June as well as being tasked to supply an elder commissioner to the next General Assembly in early June.

A reminder that our congregational **Budget Meeting** will be held on **January 18th** after the service. Our **Annual General meeting** is scheduled for **March 8th**, after the service. Our next communion is scheduled for March 1st.

Jerry Verwey
Session Clerk

Congregational Budget Meeting - January 18

Annual General Meeting - March 8



International Peace Charter - Update

We did it! We have reached the required threshold of 500 e-signatures for our Petition to the House of Commons.

We are currently at 942 e-signatures. The first step towards world peace has been successfully completed. Thank you St. Andrew's for helping us to achieve this goal. Our new goal is 1,000 e-signatures by the petition closing date of January 12, 2026.

The International Peace Charter will be introduced in the House of Commons by MP Elizabeth May in the New Year. Together we can create world peace!

Miles Craig

December 2nd - UVic School of Music Violin Concert, from the Studio of Ann Elliott-Goldschmid



Sunday, December 14th: Choral Scholars