

# OCTOBER 2025

# FAITH TIDES



Bishop's Column: She comes sailing on the wind

"I'm laying down burdens": An interview with Canon Ian Alexander

My Journey: Meet new incumbent Theo Robinson



# She comes sailing on the wind



*Image by Anna Greenwood-Lee*

*By Anna Greenwood-Lee*

My job title is bishop of the islands and inlets. I grew up sailing with my grandfather and father and met my husband while crewing on a tall ship. It was only a matter of time before the temptation of a boat to call my own got the better of me.



It took a while to find something that was both seaworthy and in our price range, but last fall James and I became the proud owners of a 1979 Tartan 37 called *Payette*. She is moored at Oak Bay and over the summer we

*Bishop Anna on her boat. Image by Anna Greenwood-Lee.*

managed to visit three island parishes by sail.

In July, while on holiday, I spent a lovely Sunday with the good people of All Saints, Salt Spring Island. In August, we had weekend visits to St. Margaret's, Galiano Island, and St. Peter's, Pender Island. Once they heard I would be arriving by boat, St. Peter's insisted on "She Came Sailing on the Wind" as the opening hymn.

Making parish visits by boat has been a lot of fun and a spiritual discipline in its own right. It's about 30 nautical miles from Oak Bay to Bedwell Harbor and even in a good strong wind with the current going with us the fastest we can get our boat sailing is 6.8 nautical miles/hour. But, of course, the wind is never quite blowing in the "right direction," and some crisscrossing of the Salish Sea is required. Moreover, it's not uncommon for the wind to more or less die altogether and for us to have to take down the sails and fire up the 1979 diesel engine (prayers appreciated), whose top speed is a noisy 5 miles per hour. We do our best to avoid motoring but when the wind dies at the mouth of Active Pass and you both want to avoid getting run down by a ferry and get to the parish potluck on time, motor you must.

Travelling by boat also requires a certain

downsizing of the episcopal trousseau.

Climbing on and off boats to get to church limits me to what I can fit in a backpack. I am of course not the first bishop to travel by boat.

The diocesan travelling crozier, which bishops in these islands and inlets have been using since 1926, comes apart into three pieces.

When I travel to parishes by boat, I often celebrate the eucharist using the [Salal and Cedar Eucharistic Prayer](#) that Laurel Dykstra has given me permission to adapt to suit our context here in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets. That prayer has been posted on our website [under liturgical resources](#). The prayer intentionally places us — in the story of salvation, in this particular part of God's creation, with whales and eagles, fern and hemlock — and reminds us of our call to safeguard the integrity of God's creation.

We are so blessed to live in this place. May God give us the wisdom to live in such a way that we honor the lands and waters, the people, plants and creatures and, above all, our creator.



*The bishop's travelling crozier. Image by Anna Greenwood-Lee.*

# 'I'm laying down burdens': an interview with Canon Ian Alexander



*Canon Ian Alexander (centre) on the first official day of Synod 2025 business. Photo Credit: Charlotte Poolton / General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada*

*By Naomi Racz*

*Earlier this year, the 2025 recipients of the Anglican Award of Merit, which recognizes outstanding contributions by Anglican laypeople, were announced. Included in that list of names is Ian Alexander, a parishioner at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, and a lay canon of the diocese. Ian will be presented with his award by Archbishop Shane Parker, at the [Order of the Diocese of British Columbia investiture service](#). The service will take place at Christ Church Cathedral,*

*Victoria on Saturday, Oct. 25 at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome to attend.*

*Besides the various roles Ian has played in our diocese, at General Synod 2023 he was elected prolocutor, a role he filled through to the 2025 General Synod. When the then-general secretary took a leave of absence at the beginning of June, Ian also stepped into the role of interim general secretary. Faith Tides caught up with Ian to hear more about his time as prolocutor, with a front row seat to the growing calls for change in the Anglican Church of Canada. This interview has been edited for clarity.*

**Naomi: You've just finished your term as prolocutor. What's been the most interesting aspect of the role?**

Ian: Well, the church is at a fairly critical juncture. The status quo is not an option. It's been interesting, to say the least, to see that realization sink in more and more widely and deeply across the church.

There's no question that finances are constrained. As revenues at the parish level and diocesan level reduce, it inevitably reduces the resources that are available at the national level. Over the previous four-year cycle [2019-2023], we did a lot of work around defining the national church, and now that work is coming to fruition.

The national church has very little authority. We're not a hierarchical church. Most of the real decision-making rests at the diocesan level. The national church's role, as we've come to understand it, is one of connecting, convening and communicating. How do you do that when resources are limited? Well, you do it by identifying where there are pockets of expertise across the country and then connecting people. Figuring out

new ways to do things when resources are limited, but needs are great, has been a very interesting challenge.

It's also been fascinating to work with three very different, but equally gifted and committed, primates: Linda Nicholls, Anne Germond, and now Shane Parker.

**I was quite surprised to see suggestions of getting rid of the role of primate and even getting rid of the national level of the church [in the Creating Pathways report]. Were you surprised to see those suggestions coming up or was that something that's been discussed before?**

I wasn't surprised. I think the six pathways that the Primate's Commission came forward with at the synod in London are refreshing. From time to time, any organization needs to really challenge its basic assumptions. Some of the pathways I find more attractive than I do others. But I wouldn't shrink from looking at any of them. And I know that this primate is committed to exploring all of them in some depth in the next three years.

The period that I've been most involved at the national level covers the last six years. And that's been a time of getting ready for change. This synod had to deal with a lot of very difficult issues, including stuff around finance, property, governance and so forth. I felt, and I think a lot of people felt, that it was one of the best synods that the church has had in quite a long time. And part of that is, I think, because we made a conscious decision to be open and transparent and not try to sweep anything under the carpet.

For the last six years there's been a gradual movement towards thinking about change in a very significant



and real way. By the time we were in London, Ontario, this summer, I think that the synod as a whole had come to that realization.

**Could you tell me a little bit about your time as interim general secretary, what that role has entailed and what insights you've gathered from being in that role?**

The general secretary went on leave a few weeks before synod and because of my existing role as prolocutor, I felt that I should offer to step up. Basically, what I said was, "I'll help you get through synod." I'd been involved with the planning already; I knew a fair bit about it. So, it seemed to make sense to help out on a short-term, voluntary basis.

It's turned out to be a bit more than that, and so I agreed to continue in the interim role on a part-time contract basis, just to keep the office running smoothly and help with the transition to the new triennium, through to the end of September. Hopefully not much longer than that. Not if Marilyn [Ian's wife] has anything to say about it — which she does!

What have I learned? What have I seen? One thing I've seen is that there is a small but dedicated team of people at Church House in Toronto who are doing fantastic work: both the staff that support general synod and the people who are responsible for particular ministry areas. They are small in number, they have fewer and fewer resources, but they are doing phenomenal work.

A second thing that I have learned is that there are a lot of people, a lot of Anglicans across Canada, who care very much about their church at every level. There is an incredible amount of generosity for Giving with Grace

and the other fundraising activities of the national church, the *Anglican Journal*, the Anglican Foundation and Alongside Hope. There is great work going on in terms of both generating resources and distributing them where they are needed: to the Council of the North, to Indigenous ministries and all the rest.

And that's a third thing: I've had a chance to work alongside Archbishop Chris Harper and Indigenous ministries a little more closely than I had previously. The energy and commitment that is going into the work of defining and building a self-determining Indigenous church inside the Anglican Church of Canada is really encouraging.

I'd sum it up by saying there are some really tough challenges ahead, and some really tough decisions that must be made, but we have a great group of people who are totally committed to it and who are also committed to the need for change.

**It was really**



*Canon Ian Alexander presents Archbishop Shane Parker with the primatial cross. Photo Credit: Brian Bukowski/General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada*

**interesting watching the election and seeing Shane Parker get elected, rather than one of the four candidates we had been focused on for months. What was that experience like for you?**

It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience to be sitting at that head table and looking out into the cathedral. I had to really go to school to learn the ins and outs of Canon III, which is the canon about the primate. There is an interesting provision in there, which says that after the second and subsequent ballots, a member of the house of clergy or of the house of laity can bring a motion to ask the bishops to send more names.

Now, the youth delegates traditionally have a day of meeting on their own before the synod convenes. Sheilagh McGlynn [coordinator of youth ministry for the national church] asked Tanya Phibbs [then-deputy prolocutor], Clare Burns [chancellor] and I to come and each sit at one of the tables where the youth delegates were having their dinner on the first night, chat with them, get to know them and tell them a little bit about synod.

Over dinner, all three of us made a point of telling the youth delegates about this slightly obscure provision of the canon, and they got quite interested in it. And lo and behold, on the day of the election, at the end of the second ballot, two of the youth delegates leapt to their feet, waving a piece of paper and saying, “We already have a motion written out, can we bring it to you?” The chancellor found it in order. And so, it was voted on. And that led to the request for more names from the house of bishops.

I’m so pleased that it was youth members of synod getting actively engaged, seeing what they felt was a need, coming to grips with the arcane ways that we do governance in our church and taking bold and decisive action. That to me is a good sign for the future of the church.

**You’re getting the Award of Merit, which is the**

**highest award for laity in the Anglican Church of Canada. You’ve been prolocutor and interim general secretary. What are your next steps going to look like?**

In terms of my own career and life and work with the church, I’m laying down burdens. I’ve already put away most of my diocesan work. I’ve put away quite a bit of my cathedral work. And after this little interim time, I’m going to be wrapping up my work with the national church. In a way, I feel as if I’m standing on one shore and I’m watching the national church move across to a new place on the other side. And I feel very good about that. I feel good to have been part of the movement that got us to the point where we can say, yes, we have to take a leap.

One of the things that I am fortunate to get to do occasionally, and God willing will continue to do because it’s a tremendous privilege, is to officiate at Evensong at the cathedral every six weeks or so. I’m getting ready to deliver a little homily this coming Sunday [*Editor’s note: this interview was conducted on August 26*]. One of the lessons is from the Gospel of John and it includes the phrase where John the Baptist says of his cousin Jesus: “He must increase, and I must decrease.” That’s kind of how I’m feeling.

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# Welcoming Naod



*Naod with his family and members of the St. George's refugee team. Image courtesy of St. George's Anglican Church.*

*By Rosamund Soares*

This August, several members of the St. George's community found themselves in the chill of the early morning, with the stars still out, at the entrance to the small Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo St. Gabriel Church in Esquimalt.

We were awake well before the break of dawn to witness and celebrate the baptism of baby Naod.

Naod was born a few weeks earlier to a young couple from Eritrea, Ruth and Tesfalem. With the help of the diocesan refugee sponsorship program, the St. George's community enabled the couple to start a new life in Canada. They were united with a brother, and a sister and her family, here in Victoria.

A stream of light drew us into the Ethiopian community, along with the rhythmic chanting. Shoes off at the door, we padded over soft carpets to our seats. The sense of sacred space was immediate. Pictures adorned the walls, intricate wooden panelling,

a humble font. The officiants themselves were clad in golden robes and headwear, along with youth dressed similarly.

We were greeted with such grace. Each was given a staff called a *meqomia*, which, translated from the Tigrinya language, means "standing support." It was indicated the prayers would be many. As women attending, we covered our heads and shoulders with a *netsela*, a white feather-light muslin.

The pattern of the readings and prayers pulled us into their space. The fragrance of incense filled the air. Smoke spiralled upwards, taking our thoughts and prayers, and blurring our vision.

The mother and child moved into the centre and were welcomed before the font, and Naod's father, godparents and family gathered around.



*Ruth and Tesfalem with Naod on his baptismal day. Image courtesy of St. George's Anglican Church.*

A large silver cross was held aloft. The cross had a beautiful and intricate pattern, a unique latticework which symbolizes the

interconnectedness of heaven and earth and everlasting

life. The officiant dipped it with our prayers into the blessed water and then swept it from side to side within the font.

The now naked baby was presented to this cross at all four directions. As Naod faced the cross, which was taller and wider than his four-week-old self, there was a look of wonder in his eyes which caused one to pause.

Naod's silence was broken as he was plunged into the font so most of his body was covered by the blessed water. The parents and godparents were sprinkled with this same water. Naod was then anointed with oil and welcomed into the community.

Moving through the climax of this baptismal service, with chanting and incense and the small baby held aloft with wondrous eyes, I was transported to a deeper place. To a place that is mystical yet echoes the familiar. A place of wonder for this ancient love that shines its light around our world; I give thanks for this grace that knows no boundaries.

As the baptism was drawing to a close it was not lost on me that a flock of Canada geese could be heard calling overhead in the now sunlit day. The celebration of new life continued as we gathered later at Ruth and Tesfalem's home to break bread in honour of their son. Welcome Naod, you and your family are held in love!

### **About the Refugee Sponsorship Agreement**

The diocese has been a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) with IRCC for many years. From 2016 to 2024, the diocese and its partners sponsored several hundred individuals. Currently, 23 cases (62 people) have applications submitted to IRCC and are in the process

with overseas visa offices. 16 cases (36 people) in the past 11 months are in their settlement year. The last few years have been focused on working through the backlog of applications we have submitted, and we are not currently making any new applications for sponsorships.

The Anglican Diocese of Islands and Inlets would like to take this opportunity to thank parish members, co-sponsors, and local communities for their vital role in welcoming hundreds of refugees to safety and new life in Canada. This important ministry would not be possible without your generosity and ongoing support, and we are deeply grateful to all who continue to make this mission of welcome possible and sustain it for the future. Ruth and Tesfalem, who arrived in Canada on September 20, 2024, are a wonderful example of how our parishes support newcomers into our communities.

### **About St. George's refugee ministry**

St George's refugee ministry was formed in September 2015. This was in response to the world lens focusing on the tragic death of a small child, who was fleeing with his family from the Syrian civil war.

From 2016-2025, along with the diocese as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, we saw private sponsorship obtained for four families. Many prayers, much fundraising and the solid determination of the St. George's community made this possible, for which we give thanks. These refugee families from Syria and Eritrea continue to grow, work hard and contribute to their new homeland.

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# Cathedral welcomes three new ‘gap year’ scholars



*Pictured (left to right) are Annabel Shipley, Marianne Robinson and Oriel Chapman. Images courtesy of Christ Church Cathedral.*

*By Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria*

A “gap year” is a term common in the UK, referring to a year off full-time education between high school and university. After an intensive few years of high school, terminating in examinations, many young adults in the UK opt to spend a year abroad, immersing themselves in new places and cultures. Many of these students already have a deferred place at a university, but some embark on a year abroad to help discern their next step in life.

With a new academic year underway, the cathedral music staff are delighted to be welcoming three new gap year scholars from the UK: Annabel Shipley, Marianne Robinson and Oriel Chapman.

Annabel is from Salisbury, England and was a chorister at the cathedral there. She also plays violin and saxophone. Annabel will be spending most of her days in the Cathedral School, where she is also an intern educational assistant. She will serve as a role model for the young choristers and will also work with the school's string ensemble and band.

Marianne is from Canterbury and plays the organ and sings. Oriel comes from the south-west coast of England and also plays the organ and sings. Oriel and Marianne will be alternating Sunday morning playing duties at St Mary's, Oak Bay (currently without a music director). They will hone their skills in parish music-making and will have access to the organ for practice. Over the course of the year, as they grow in confidence, they will increasingly be heard on the cathedral organ, accompanying hymns and anthems and playing voluntaries.

All three gap year students are in Victoria to serve, grow and develop their skills as professional church musicians, in addition to experiencing life in a new country. Primary to all their roles is full participation in the cathedral choir. The two organists will also be doing lots of organ practice, with the goal of making university applications or sitting exams.

All three are excited to be in Victoria. Annabel looks forward to trying “everything that comes my way, even if that means learning to ski!” Marianne is “really looking forward to experience living in another country, meeting new friends and making music with everyone.” And Oriel is “so excited to join the warm and enthusiastic community of Christ Church Cathedral” and make some “beautiful music.”

Christ Church Cathedral has been offering a gap year

choral scholarship, coupled with work as an assistant in the Cathedral School, since 2021. The first gap year student, a former chorister at Christ Church, Oxford, contacted the cathedral with the idea of coming over to Victoria for a year, and the program carried on from there. Since then, this choral exchange program has fostered the professional development of the five people who have taken part in it, building relationships within the local community and across the world.

“The presence of these three eighteen-year-olds who come to us already with a formation in church, cathedral and cathedral school life, brings a wealth of value to our common life as we continue to realize our vision of becoming an ‘Anglican centre for spirituality, learning, culture, heritage and community for these Islands and Inlets,’” says Donald Hunt, director of music at the cathedral.

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## Anglican youth are rooted and rising



*Youth at CLAY 2025 dance along to a local Saskatoon band.  
Photo by Sharon Hallsor.*

*By Sharon Hallsor*

Every two years, Anglican and Lutheran youth (aged 14-19) come together from all parts of Canada to celebrate their relationships with Christ and forge new relationships with one another. It is a remarkable experience, offering faith, fun and adventure. Of course, I am talking about CLAY: the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth gathering.

This summer, the event was held in downtown Saskatoon, Sask. on Aug. 21-24 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Over 350 youths, leaders, clergy and bishops gathered around the theme of “Rooted and Rising.”

Jordan Cantwell, United Church growth animator for the prairie regions, proved to be an excellent keynote speaker during the large group gatherings each day. Using engaging storytelling, humour and parables of Jesus, Jordan called on the youth to consider what roots them in their faith and in their sense of self. And how can they carry these gifts out into the world?



We  
were

*Vancouver Island CLAY team at Wanuskewin  
Heritage Park. Photo courtesy of Sharon Hallsor.*

fortunate to have several youths from Victoria, BC attend this year’s CLAY: Aanika White (14), Genessa Poilievre (15), Dawn Bradley (15) and Scarlett Allen



(15) from St. Luke, Cedar Hill. Sam Sayers (15), joined the group in Saskatoon and attended from Lutheran Church of the Cross. I was pleased to provide the primary leadership for our team, with the support of Tara Poilievre, St. Luke's youth leader and Lyndon Sayers, pastor at Lutheran Church of the Cross, Victoria.

As has become the custom for our diocesan youth travelling to CLAY, our delegation worked hard beforehand to raise enough funds to include a “pre-trip” in order to explore the wider region in which CLAY was being held. This year it was the prairies of Western Canada. Flying from Victoria to Calgary, and driving on to Saskatoon and back, provided an even deeper experience of God, and enabled us to consider what “rooted and rising” might mean for us.

Our



*St. Luke's youth at Christ Church in Millarville, Alberta. Photo by Sharon Hallsor*

journey began along the beautiful foothills of the Rocky Mountains heading south on the Cowboy Trail, with stops at Christ Church in Millarville (built in 1896); Bar U Ranch, a national historic site in Longview; the Okotoks Erratic; and the UNESCO world heritage site of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump near Fort MacLeod. Further highlights of our trip included visiting the Calgary Zoo; exploring the vast, flat prairie landscape; and a rather hot day in

Drumheller to see first-hand the depth and breadth of God's creation over time at the Royal Tyrrell Museum.

During our time at CLAY, we participated in a very well organized and thoughtful program. Overall, our time was divided between three church locations: the cathedral, Knox United Church and Zion Lutheran Church. Approximately 20 workshops were offered, and we encouraged our youth to choose activities that interested them most.

These are just a few of the experiences we shared this summer. More importantly though, we had a rare moment of time that we were able to spend together, knowing God, and knowing that we are loved and supported. For this, I will be forever grateful.

I strongly encourage you to encourage the youth in your parish to attend the next CLAY. The good news is that the next gathering will be much closer to home. On the last day, it was announced that CLAY 2027 will be held on Vancouver Island in Nanaimo. Hopefully, I will see you there.

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# Diocesan conference to explore the God who is not elsewhere



*Bishop Anna speaks at the 2024 We Together conference in Victoria. Photo Credit: J Abram Photography.*

*By Faith Tides*

We Together is a diocesan conference hosted by the Diocese of Islands and Inlets every other year. The aim of the conference is to strengthen connections across the diocese. This year's We Together will take place on Nov. 14-15 at St. Paul's, Nanaimo.

On Friday evening, Nov. 14, there will be a banquet at St. Paul's, with a keynote talk from John Thatamanil. John will explore the conference theme "God is Not Elsewhere." His talk will ask and attempt to answer the

question: if God is not elsewhere, God must be available to experience here and now, so what wisdom and practices do we need to access the love that is not in hiding?

John is professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York, an Anglican priest and diocesan theologian for the Diocese of Islands and Inlets.

[READ: A preview of John Thatamanil's We Together 2025 talk](#)

The next day, Saturday, Nov. 15, participants will be able to choose from a range of workshops, all exploring the conference's theme in a variety of ways.

Jenny Replogle, canon for lay-led parishes and parishes-in-transition and currently interim executive archdeacon, will lead a workshop on The Benedictine Life in Congregations. The workshop will look at the principles of Benedictine life — stability, obedience, conversion of life — and explore what they have to offer those called to lead the church today. The workshop will draw on both the depths of our faith tradition as well as organization development and change processes to enable clergy to lead and thrive in the places where they are called.

Jonathan Thomas, dean and rector of Christ Church Cathedral, will lead a primer on children's spirituality. The workshop will use the "wondering questions" technique from the Godly Play Foundation, to explore how to lead children (and adults new to the faith) deeper into the stories of our faith — and the realization that they are characters in this holy narrative.



In his workshop, Hopeful Realism and the Call to Mutual Encouragement, Gordon T Smith, executive director of Christian Higher Education Canada, will look at how we can cultivate the capacity to name reality while sustaining a resilient hopefulness in the fact of a polarized and authoritarian age. To this end, clergy can be a means of encouragement to others — in the homily, writing, spiritual direction, or any one-on-one conversation.

Denise Doerksen, incumbent at Holy Trinity, North Saanich, and Christine Conkin, incumbent of St. George's, Cadboro Bay, will both be leading workshops on creativity and spirituality, Denise through art and Christine through the medium of dance. Denise's workshop will ask: what might it mean to be co-artists with God as Divine Artist? There will be discussions and artistic exercises.

Christine's workshop will ask: in a world that so highly values leadership, how do we learn to engage Jesus' call to "Follow me!"? What are the dynamics of following and leading? Lessons from the dance floor will help participants deepen their practice of faithfully following Jesus in the church and beyond.

Brendon Neilson, executive director of the diocese, will lead a workshop on metaphor, how metaphor works and what that means for our experience of this life, our theologies and how we embody our convictions.

To register for We Together, visit [the event page on the diocesan website](#). The deadline to register for We Together is Nov. 3. Some travel grants are available if you require financial aid to participate in the conference.

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# Keeping company with love



Photo by [Marco Bianchetti](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By John J. Thatamanil

How would our lives be different if we believed that God is not elsewhere (the theme for our We Together gathering)?

Scratch that question. "Believe" is a broken word. We take for granted that the word means something like, "accept the truth of a proposition." Suppose I'm inside a drab, windowless hotel conference room. You come in from outside and tell me that it is raining. I "believe" you if I accept the truth of your claim. Such believing is done with the mind and seems a limited, low-stakes affair.

But suppose you are a treasured friend of many years — someone who would never lie to me about matters small or large. Now the word "believe" means something heftier — more like the meaning of the New Testament Greek word *pistis*, which we translate as "faith." Here, "faith" or "believe" means wholehearted

trust grounded in relationship. I don't just believe a proposition; I believe *you*.

Now, a third possibility: water from your umbrella drips onto and into my socks, despite your caution. Now, I know by experience. Does the word "believe" even apply? Now my soaked socks attest to the truth of your claim.

Is such knowledge by experience possible concerning the truth "God is not elsewhere?" Many strands of the Christian tradition (and other traditions too) insist that such experiential knowledge of God is possible and necessary for abundant life.

The word "mysticism" is sometimes used to talk about this kind of direct experiential knowledge. I have a love-hate relationship with the word; I'm unsure how useful it is. The word often makes people feel like they need a huge lights-blaring, Saul-knocked-off-his-donkey kind of experience for something to count as mystical. There is the further notion that you need to be a special kind of person — a mystic — to have such experiences. They're not available to ordinary folks like you and me. Paradoxically, such expectations foil experience rather than deepen it.

What if our knowledge of God is as ordinary as rainwater soaking through socks? As profound and as ordinary. The contemporary contemplative prayer movement holds that divine presence is readily available as we become accustomed to abiding in silence — the site of divine dwelling. Variations abound, but the basic practice is simple. Sit quietly and open your heart to the divine. Find a word that holds your intention to be open to divine presence. For me, that word is "surrender." When the chatter begins, when thoughts intrude and consume, refuse to do

battle with them. Say the word and fall back into silence, the stillness where God dwells.

Will something magical happen? Perhaps. We don't get to choose how God makes Godself available. But the focus of contemplative prayer across traditions is not the exceptional or extraordinary. Instead, the goal is intimacy, as simple and profound as sitting companionably with a dear friend and becoming familiar with each other, until an experiential knowledge begins to take root that God is not elsewhere.

And how might this transform your life, the 95% in which you are not sitting in silence? Another quotidian example. Recall how, when you first fell in love with your partner, you might suddenly, when you were out and about town, spot someone in the distance who has the same shock of red hair and is roughly the same height. Your heart quickens because you think, "That's her!" until the stranger turns her head and you realize that it's not your partner.

The red hair fooled you... or perhaps it did not! You are now alert to signs and traces of your beloved everywhere. You are attuned to this particular form of beauty as never before. Who knew there were so many redheads!?

Keeping company with Love works very much like that. Your time in silence attunes you to Love's omnipresence — in the kindness of the stranger who holds the door open for you as you rush to work; the joyous excitement of your dog as you return after a day's work or even a 20-minute errand; a friend's consoling hug in the midst of difficulty; or your own act of love for an unhoused person who asks you for food. You now see Love, which is to say, God,

everywhere.

Perhaps you are tempted to say that these little acts of ordinary love are all love with a lower case “l,” not Love itself, and surely not God.

Are you sure? Is that how these encounters with love feel in your body? Are you not encountering the same Love you keep company with in silence?

Perhaps your inclination to suggest that these little loves, given and received, cannot count as divine is the product of a misguided theology that has long taught you to believe that God is elsewhere “watching us from a distance.” What if there is only One Love refracted through an infinite multiplicity of prisms, One Love in a multitude of colors and varieties — erotic, brotherly/sisterly, the love of friendship — all manifestations of a boundless Love that suffuses all things? What if we really do live in a Love-soaked universe, a universe in which God is not elsewhere?

Let us continue this conversation when we gather at We Together.

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# Ripples: October 2025

*By Faith Tides*



## A family service on the beach

On Sunday, Aug. 17, St. Philip's, Oak Bay, held a family service at Willows Beach. Most of what happens at a regular eucharist was reprised, though parts of the liturgy reflected the ocean setting; some participants chose to feel the sand between their toes! The children present constructed a cross out of driftwood; the music team led in praising God; and Allen Doerksen, incumbent at St. Philip's, waded into a difficult passage about the divisive impact of Jesus' ministry. Afterwards coffee and treats were served; passers-by joined in and stayed for the coffee time. Now that this service has happened two years in a row, it's safe to call it a parish tradition!

## A baby shower with a twist

During the month of May 2025, St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in Duncan was invited to participate in a “Baby Shower.” The shower was hosted by the parish ACW for the benefit of Duncan's [House of Grace](#). Parishioners were invited to donate new items — clothing, blankets, diapers, toys — to be presented to the local centre. House of Grace was most grateful of the support from St. John's.



## Highway to heaven

The man on the roof of St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Sidney (see photo gallery above) likely didn't have the 1980s TV series in mind as he walked along cleaning moss off the roof and steeple. Up there, however, he was likely closer to heaven than any parishioner has ever been.

## Amazing Journey day camp enters 14th summer

This summer was the 14th year St. Luke's, Cedar Hill, together with neighbours Lutheran Church of the Cross, held the Amazing Journey day camp. The camp was held in the mornings from July 7 to July 11 and the theme was "Fun with Living Water." There were 40 campers registered, and 17 youth volunteers and 10 adult volunteers helped out for all or part of the week. Many of the youth volunteers were campers themselves when they were in preschool and elementary school and enjoyed being camp leaders. We had a great time at the camp: singing, playing games, hearing Bible stories, doing crafts and enjoying snacks. The campers and volunteers agreed that this was an amazing week at day camp.

## Anglican and United traditions mingle

On Sept. 7, 2025, St. Philip's, Cedar held its annual "Welcome Back" Sunday joint service with Cedar United Church. A wonderful sharing of Anglican and United traditions, this service allowed all to see the many commonalities and to experience unique aspects of each denomination's worship practices.

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# 'A moment that turned me back towards God'

*By Theo Robinson*

*Content warning: mention of miscarriage*



*Photo courtesy of Theo Robinson.*

My name is Theo Robinson, and I am the new incumbent at St. Peter's, Quamichan in North Cowichan. I have been asked to tell you the story of how I came to be where I am today.

Because it's important to my story, I need to preface by mentioning that I am transgender.

I was born into a life of privilege with my father, a pediatrician, and my mother, who retired from nursing in order to stay home and raise my brother and me. We lived in an upper-class area in a big house, with two cars, every new gadget we could ever want and annual trips to places like Disney World and Hawaii. I have come to realize that I grew up in a suburban bubble,

sheltered from the world outside my neighbourhood.

I was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, mostly because of my paternal grandmother. I spent all of my childhood attending St. Bernadette's Parish with her, primarily because she would take me out for lunch afterwards. I remember attending a Bible class with my friends and taking catechism at school, but my religious faith was built almost entirely from Sunday morning church with my grandma.

As I grew into my teenage years, I supposedly found better things to do with my time than sit at church. I also started to question what I had been learning. I got it into my head that I wasn't allowed to believe in both science and religion, and so I stopped going to church. Also, in my early twenties when I realized I was a lesbian, I felt so unwelcomed by the church that I convinced myself I was a non-believer.

However, there were still times when I went to church, usually during occasions of sorrow or confusion. I never could explain my need to go to church, and it certainly didn't make me go on a regular basis. But for brief, inexplicable moments, I found peace. The most significant time I found peace at church was after my miscarriage, ten weeks into my pregnancy.

There was no known cause, of course, but I was convinced that I had done something wrong. I was shocked beyond belief and had no idea what to do. My partner at the time suggested that I go to church. It was an unusual suggestion as they did not believe in God, but I figured it wouldn't do any harm. We attended a Baptist service at a church nearby. All I remember is the music and the feeling of peace that washed over me as I cried through the entire service. It was a moment that turned me back towards God and the church.

Not too long afterward, I got pregnant again and gave birth to my beautiful baby, El. Suddenly, it was very important that my child be baptized and raised in a church. During the baptismal interview, I was asked a very important question: why do I want El to be baptized? I couldn't answer that question right away, I just knew it was something I had to do, something my heart was telling me to do.

I started attending church — only the quiet, contemplative Monday night service at first. I was very hesitant in the beginning, unsure of my beliefs and my reasons for being there. I didn't even take part in communion at first. The turning point came on Maundy Thursday during the Easter season following Elly's baptism. I was asked to read the passage from 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. I think I hesitated somewhere around "This is my body." The realization of the words I was about to speak struck me speechless. The eucharistic prayer is such an important part of Jesus' story; I was humbled and honoured to be speaking these words aloud. In my head these words should have only been spoken by priests. Suddenly, I felt something on my shoulder. I looked over but of course there was no one there. It was a very powerful moment. I knew in my heart God was telling me it was okay to go on with the reading.

That's when I really started paying attention. I learned the Lord's Prayer as a child, but I never really listened to the words. Same with the music. As I started really hearing the words, I finally understood what God has been trying to say to me all these years. God is here. God wants to be a part of my life. God loves me.

It wasn't long after that I felt the call to God's work. After many conversations with my priest, I decided to attend the University of Winnipeg to attain a master of

divinity and pursue ordination. This was a complete about-face from my work as a credit and collection specialist! I was ordained a transitional deacon on May 1, 2019, and a priest on January 18, 2020. I tell people that I grew up as a priest during the pandemic!

My first two calls in the Diocese of Rupert's Land were half-time at one parish and half-time in a Lutheran shared ministry of six parishes. By the beginning of 2022, I was full-time at the shared ministry. Being in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets with only one parish is quite different but also comes with challenges that I have not yet had to face in my prior placements.

I have a partner, Cass, and two children who have stayed in Winnipeg to complete their various school endeavours. We also have two dogs and two cats. Cass is planning to join me within five years or so. We will see how many animals come with her! Prayers are appreciated as we go through this time of challenging transition. And while it is very hard to be away from my family, I am happy to be at St. Peter's and look forward to many years as their incumbent.

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# Letter to the editor (October 2025)



*By Faith Tides*

Dear Editor,

I continue to be impressed with the work of Christ Church Cathedral's director of music, Donald Hunt. His article ([Cathedral connects young people to music education](#)) is yet another fine description of the effort he and his colleagues and choirs are making, not only to educate young people in the centuries-old traditions of cathedral music, but also to promote a wide variety of musical offerings at our cathedral, a teaching role which cathedrals are well-positioned to play. My thanks to him for mentioning last May's choral evensong, sung by the young choristers at my parish, St. Andrew's in Sidney.

The last two paragraphs of his article, while focused primarily on music education for young people, also reveal how passionate Hunt feels about his work and the incredibly rich music program the cathedral offers, not only on site but also in the diocese and beyond. We



are extremely fortunate to have such a capable musician in our midst.

Gary Davies  
*St. Andrew's, Sidney*

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