

# First Met News

Spring 2021 Newsletter



December 6: Recognizing the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

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## First Met Hours of Operation

CHURCH BUILDING HOURS  
Monday—Friday  
8:30 am -3:30 pm  
5:45—9:45 pm (Mon-Thurs)

OFFICE HOURS  
Monday to Thursday  
9:00 to Noon and 1:00—3:00 pm

WELCOME ATTENDANTS  
Monday—Friday 10:00 to Noon  
Monday—Thursday 1:00—3:00 pm

SUNDAY HOURS  
8:30 am - 2:00 pm

Welcome attendants will not be available till after the public health orders of Jan 8 have been rescinded. Please phone for an appointment Mon to Thurs if you have urgent church business.

Office Contact Information  
Phone: 250-388-5188

### Need pastoral care ?

Please call the church at  
(250) 388-5188, press 4,  
then wait on the line.

## Coming Soon in Broadview

### Uncertain Harvest

This intimate photo essay documents a family farm and its migrant workers in a growing season marked by disruptions.

### Fentanyl Funerals

Overdose deaths are surging in Canada. Clergy closest to the crisis have the heartbreaking and deeply Christian task of saying goodbye.

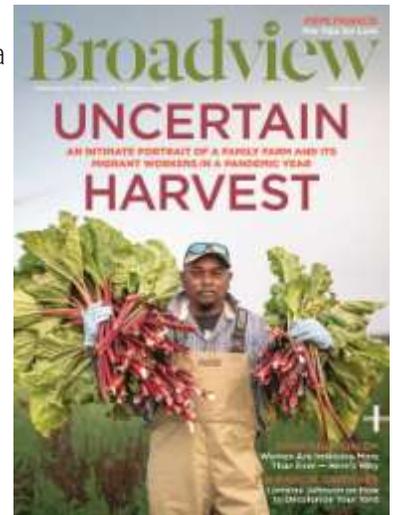
### The Church's COVID Year

Navigating the pandemic hasn't been easy, but the church may be more united than ever, writes Trisha Elliott.

### The Radical Gardener

Native-plant enthusiast Lorraine Johnson believes that what we plant in our yards can change the world.

NOTE: The March issue will start to arrive in mailboxes February 1st. For more information, contact Sharron Higgins.



## Schedule for Upcoming Newsletters

The deadlines for submissions for upcoming newsletters are:

- Summer 2021: Jun 6 (published by June 20)
- Fall 2021: Aug 30 (published by Sep 13)
- Winter 2021: November 8 (published by Nov 16)

## Sunday Services

Public attendance at church services is suspended as part of extended province-wide restrictions to fight the spread of COVID-19. Check the First Met website for updates.

Virtual church services: <https://www.firstmetvictoria.com/live/>  
Live streaming of regular Sunday Service is FREE; however, we welcome donations from our online community.



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# Shelagh's Message



One of the books that came into our house this Christmas was Bishop **Michael Curry's** *Love is The Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*. You may remember him, no doubt, from Prince Harry and Meagan Markle's wedding. **Who knew the sermon would go viral?**

His engaging spirituality and humour just perfectly expressed the hopefulness of that moment. I ended up underlining many sentences in this book, an annoying habit developed during years of studying and then writing sermons. (It makes it awkward when it comes to lending the books out: will others try to understand my points in the margins, I wonder?) Listen to a few sentences from a chapter entitled **"What**

**Desmond Tutu and Dolly Parton Have in Common: "Love is God's way, the moral way, but it's also the only thing that works. It's the rare moment where idealism actually overlaps with pragmatism. People don't think of Jesus as a strategist, but he was a leader who successfully built what was essentially a radical equal rights movement within a brutal empire. "**

**Curry's emphasis on the community of support and relying on God's love to fuel our** spiritual initiatives is just perfect for me as we enter a new chapter of the Pandemic. We are having to seek out that essential balance of being by ourselves for public health reasons and finding community in every way possible. I think many of us are tired of trying to walk this tightrope. But now we can actually see hope at the end of the wire: some members of our community of faith have received their vaccinations.

How do you hold on to Hope in these Troubling Times? Hope has a rich history here at Balmoral and Quadra. The energy of people making sure to telephone others, to send faxes and snail mail has evolved into Zoom meetings and e-cards. But telephone calls are still a hugely important part of holding onto hope. As part of those chats and notes and emails, gratitude is often expressed for simple acts of friendship which might have seemed quite ordinary just one year ago today.

Hope is reinforced for me when I reflect on the beautiful energy being shared in our community, and through actions for others around us in the North Park Neighbourhood. We have **pivoted so often! I have done "Covid Baptisms" in which only a handful of people were able to be** with me. A deep THANK YOU to the volunteers who are stretching themselves to maintain the web of connections. A special word here for the power of prayer and our own prayer team. The person/cause you have on your heart does NOT need to be in our community, or even our country to be shared with them. When you do, you will feel your own Hope reinforced and renewed.

*Shelagh*

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*"Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future."* – Nelson Mandela

# Greetings from our Board Chair

Nothing brilliant comes to my mind this morning. Perhaps it is because of the persistent rain. When the sun shines, at least we can reflect its beauty.

There is hope, though. In the darkest, greyest days of winter, we are buoyed by the thought of spring—the tiny crocuses and snowdrops that even now bravely poke their heads out of the earth and the glorious yellow trumpets of the daffodils. Spring means buds on the bushes and blossoms on the Japanese cherry and plum trees. And sunshine that warms the shoulders on your walks instead of raindrops.

So, we carry on with the work of the church in whatever ways we can, confident in the hope of the eternal spring that is yet to be.

Here are just a few of the works of First-Met so far this year:

- Yoga and Tai Chi have resumed under COVID guidelines.
- A new Co-op student, Peter Chalmers, has been hired.
- **The Men's Luncheon Group has resumed meeting, using Zoom.**
- We have passed a tentative 2021 budget awaiting your comments, questions or suggestions.
- February 2, a Zoom Affirming meeting was held with Corey Keith.
- The Redevelopment Task Group is meeting with the United Church Property Development Corporation.
- An Ageing to Sageing Course is scheduled on Zoom from Feb, 4 to March 11.
- Kyla Morgan Morrison is returning to her position as Health and Wellness Advocate.

*Edeana Malcolm, Board Chair*



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## Lax Kw'alaams' Church Destroyed by Fire

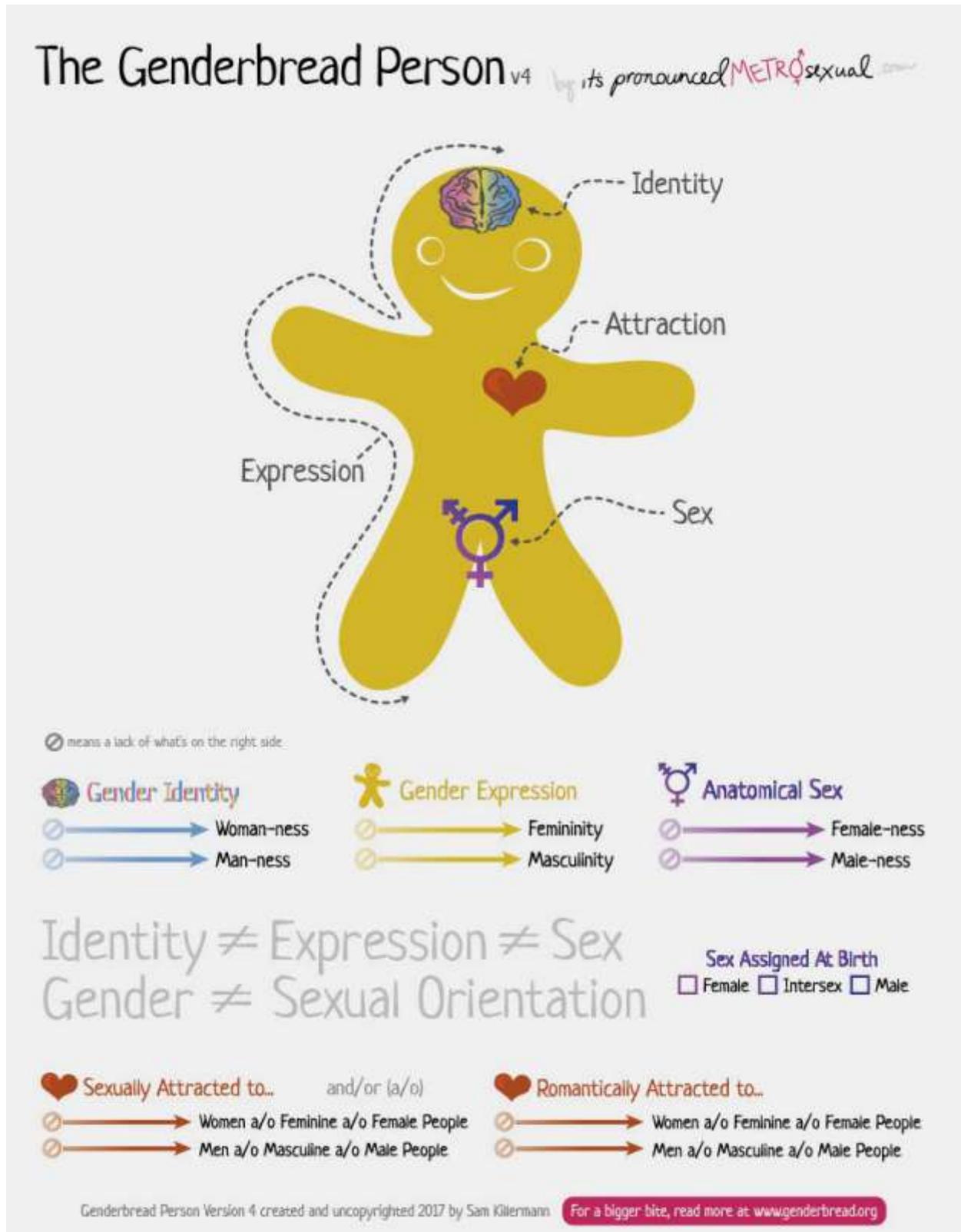


Grace United Church in Lax Kw'alaams was destroyed by fire on January 29. Fortunately no one was hurt in the blaze. Our prayers are with minister Lawrence Sankey and the congregation as they recover from this loss.

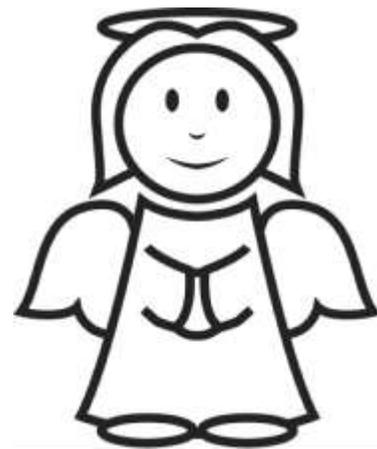
**Lax Kw'alaams is a small First Nations** community of approximately 4,000 people located north of Prince Rupert and is accessible only by ferry from Prince Rupert, water taxi or float plane. The community was formerly known as Port Simpson, but changed its name **officially to Lax Kw'alaams. The name is derived from the Tsimshian language and means "place of wild roses".**

# Becoming an Affirming Congregation

Social worker Corey Keith presented a workshop to members of the congregation on February 2nd. Included in his materials was a graphic called The Genderbread Person that aids understanding of gender. More information is available on the Genderbread website: <https://www.genderbread.org/>



# Angel Gifts 2020: The Pandemic Version



As we all know, 2020 was a different kind of year with many challenges. Some challenges can seem overwhelming, while others are opportunities **to learn and to work for good, though different from “normal”, outcomes.** The latter was the case with 2020’s Angel Gift Program.

When it became clear that the COVID19 pandemic was going to be with us for an extended period of time, it began to look as if there would be no possibility for Our Place to consider giving out Angel Gifts this year. There were so many fears, risks and unknowns – yet it also was obvious that the need was greater than ever. We were determined to make the program happen somehow, even if it had to be much smaller in its extent than in past years. Our Place designated two of its management staff members to work with its Outreach team and the Angel Gifts Coordinator to revamp the process so that all of the individual churches would feel able to participate safely. We began in September – **asking questions, listening to people’s concerns and ideas, and discussing what seemed workable.** From the thoughtful comments we received it quickly became apparent that Angel Gifts is a well-loved project for many churches, organizations and individual donors.



The outcome of all this planning resulted in Plan A – purchased and wrapped gifts, as in the past, and Plan B – monetary donations in the approximate value of a gift, but with volunteers doing the shopping and wrapping. We thought that the combination of these two plans might result in 200-300 gifts. Collection of **recipients’ names was done in small increments, to ensure that “our reach did not exceed our grasp”.** It was very exciting when more and more requests for additional names kept coming from so many participants! The final outcome was that we gave out 509 names. **First Met’s combined Plan A and Plan B gift total was 54.** In addition, there were extra gifts that also were donated and would be used to make sure that any latecomers also could receive gifts. **One recipient wrote, “It was very meaningful to receive a gift from a complete stranger/Angel with no judgements, conditions, or strings attached. For many, me included, despite having family in town, it was the only gift I received. You made my Christmas morning.”**

There are so many people to thank for their hard work to achieve this outstanding result! Here at First Met, thanks go to the office and custodial staff, and the Communications team, for ongoing advice and assistance about how we could make Angel Gifts happen at First Met in 2020. Thanks to the Welcome Attendant team who helped to collect your gifts at the door. Thank you to Andrea Hofmeyr and Shelagh MacKinnon for transportation of our gifts to their final sorting place and to Micia Kanstrup for her help at the final sorting. And *special thanks* to Shelagh for her ongoing support and enthusiasm for the Angel Gifts program!

*Penny Bond, Angel Gift Coordinator*

***Editor’s Note: And a very special thank you to Penny, who not only coordinated the gifts from First Metropolitan but was also the overall Angel Gifts Coordinator working closely with Our Place staff.***

# First Met Financial Update

Due to the pandemic, the United Church of Canada has temporarily suspended some sections of the Manual to allow congregational governing bodies to approve items normally approved by congregations. Your church board **has approved First Met's 2019 annual report** including financials, reappointed the CPCM accounting firm and approved drafts of the 2021 restricted fund, capital and operating budgets. In mid-February, you will be receiving a copy of these draft budgets along with explanatory notes and will have the opportunity to discuss these budgets in online sessions or individually with the Treasurer.

Those budgets include a year-end projection for the 2020 Operating budget. It shows revenues approximately \$87,000 and expenses approximately \$143,500 below budget necessitating a withdrawal of \$135,500 from the Foundation compared to the \$192,000 budgeted. The Foundation Board of Directors continue to provide much appreciated support **to First Met's cashflow by enabling timely** withdrawals when needed.

Because more details about the 2020 year-end and 2021 budget will be sent to you, this article focuses on the restricted funds. The Board is looking to you to identify opportunities within or outside First Met for these funds to be spent particularly in areas impacted by the pandemic. These funds, their specific criteria for use, and contact include:

**E Mayne Fund: This fund's purpose is to enhance First Met's audio-visual equipment.** Please contact Joan Mason, Leader, Audio-Visual.

**H&G James Fund: Reverend Howley James' family established this fund to provide**

financial assistance to First Met congregation members looking into ministry or training for ministry. Please contact Edeana Malcolm, Board Liaison to the Worship and Christian Spiritual Development Team for more details.

**Library Fund: This fund's purpose is to buy books and other supplies for the Mountford Library.** Please contact Denise Holmen, Library Team Leader for more details.

**Margaret Cameron Fund: This fund's purpose is to assist people in need which it has been doing throughout the pandemic.** Please contact Sharron Higgins, Spiritual Care and Wellness Team Leader or Shelagh MacKinnon, Lead Minister for more details.

**Music Fund: This fund's purpose is to support,** when the operating fund cannot, music workshops and special presentations, choir expenses and some instrument maintenance, repair or upgrading. Please contact Mary Byrne, Music Team Leader or Kelly Charlton, Director of Music Ministry for more details.

**Health Bursary Fund: This fund provides bursaries to support individual participation in any health-related program and to support community health initiatives.** Please contact Edeana Malcolm, Board Chair or Shelagh MacKinnon, Lead Minister for more details.

Please get in touch the appropriate person listed above to discuss your ideas. If you are uncertain where your idea might fall, please feel free to contact any Board Member including myself for guidance. For any questions on First Met finances, please contact me.

*Liane Clark, Treasurer*



Thank you to all our contributors  
and volunteers!

# Remembering Rev. Gordon Cann

When Rev. Gordon Cann joined First Metropolitan's ministerial team at a pivotal time, it was a case of the right person at the right time. Gordon brought extensive church experience from across Canada, a love for people and for storytelling, plus an unwavering faith and jubilant spirit.

Often his smile and good-natured friendliness first engaged folk. Soon, however, people discovered what lay underneath - a bedrock of the finest quality: integrity, compassion, generosity, faithfulness, humility. Gordon was a trusted friend and mentor to many of us, myself included. He always had our best interests at heart. It was easy to welcome him into our homes and into our lives... especially when strawberries were in season! His strawberry ministry became legendary!

Gordon and parish nurse Ann Maffey had a great rapport as they went about their caring ministries, and he was fondly regarded by all staff. Known for his humour, one Epiphany Explorations, he really outdid himself. In his extended introduction of the three-time Leacock Humour Award winner, Arthur Black, Gordon had people rolling in the aisles. How could poor Arthur follow that?

Gordon and his wife Ann Cann forged a lifelong partnership of love and support that informed and strengthened them in reaching out to others. They put me in mind of the verse in a Walter Farquharson hymn:

*"From the homes in which we're nurtured, with the love that shapes us there, teach us, God, to claim as family every one whose life we share."*

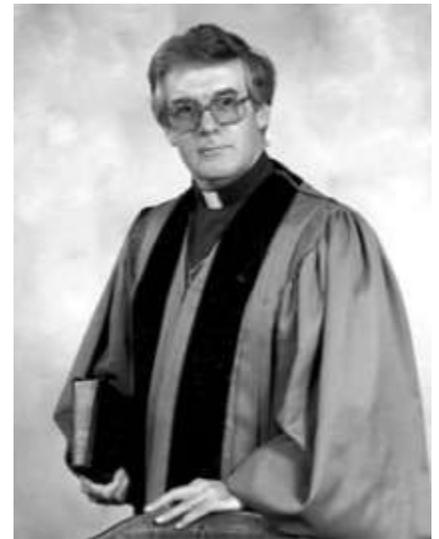
On more than one occasion, I saw them putting themselves at risk as they helped someone through a rough patch.

Their own family had a special place in their lives. As seniors, they had moved to Sidney where daughter Kim and husband John and family lived nearby. As both Gordon and Ann faced growing health issues, daughter Mary Lou and husband David retired, left Ontario and moved in with them. So, Gordon and Ann each were sustained by the love and care of family until it was time for the next great adventure.

Today, we remember Gordon as someone whose life and ministry were based upon the teachings and love of Christ.

*"Well done, good and faithful servant!"*

Rev. Dr. Allan Saunders, Minister Emeritus



## Prayer Connections

Prayers continue though the church building is closed. Would you like the Prayer Connections Team to pray for you or those you care about? To make a request:

- Email: [prayer@firstmetvictoria.com](mailto:prayer@firstmetvictoria.com)
- Via the church website; click on the link on the bottom menu bar.
- Ask a staff member to pass on your request if you do not have email.

# Lent: Journeying Toward Easter

Lent is a time of reflection and preparation for Easter. The 40 days of Lent commemorate the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert praying and fasting before his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It begins with Ash Wednesday (February 17). The date of Easter Sunday varies from year to year from March 22 to April 25. It is always the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or just after the spring equinox.



The day before Ash Wednesday is often called Mardi Gras (meaning Fat Tuesday) or Shrove Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the 1000-year-old tradition of shriving or confessing **one's sins**. **It also was a day that Christians used up their stores of** meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods prior to the fasting of Lent. Pancakes became associated with the day as they were a dish that could use up these foods.



**Ash Wednesday services draw on ancient Biblical traditions of covering one's** head with ashes as a sign of sorrow and repentance. The ashes used in **today's services are made by burning palms from the previous year's Palm** Sunday service. Worshippers are marked with a cross on their foreheads or palms as a mark of mortality. Last year, glitter was added to the ashes to remind the congregation that we are made of star dust.

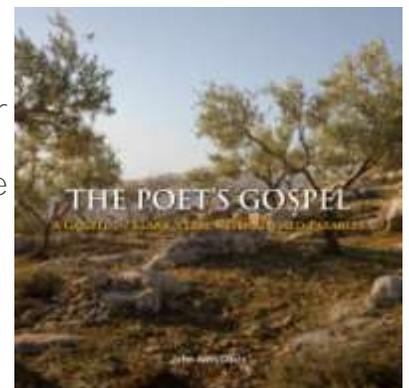
First Metropolitan has created a booklet of Lenten reflections which is being mailed out to those who do not have email and will also be available for download from the website. The Sunday services during Lent will focus on the New Creed, the brief affirmation of our faith, created in 1968 and amended, most recently, in 1995.

You may find these books from the Mountford Library useful in planning your own Lenten journey:

- Crossan, John Dominic and Sarah Sexton Crossan. *Resurrecting Easter: How the West Lost and the East Kept the Original Easter Vision*. New York: HarperOne, 2018(c). 232.5 C951 ( also available at the Greater Victoria Public Library)
- McLaren, Brian D. *We Make the Road by Walking: A Year-Long Quest for Spiritual Formation, Reorientation, and Activation*. New York: Jericho Books, 2014(c). 248.4 M161
- Moore, Thomas. *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994. 158.1 M824

Here are two online resources you might consider for personal study:

- *What Does God Want of Us? TED Talks Meet the Bible: A Lenten Journey* Is a resource adapted by the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster. It pairs five TED talks of six to 13 minutes with a piece of scripture. The study guide can be used individually or in a group. The downloadable guide contains a focus for each of the five weekly reflections, opening and closing prayers and questions for reflection. <https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-resources/lent-2021-resources>
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is an organization that brings churches together in Christian unity. Its Lenten study this year focuses on **The Poet's Gospel** by John Alan Davis. The study includes sound files of the poems and a downloadable booklet introducing the selected poems and questions for reflection. <https://ctbi.org.uk/lent-study-2021/>.



# Why do the colours of the church hangings change?

Spring is coming! As the weather warms, soon new colours will begin to blossom and bloom. Along **with the transformation of the Earth's natural colours, the colours of the Church will also be** changing as we enter a new liturgical season. As we leave the Ordinary Time after Epiphany and enter the season of Lent, the vestments and decorations of First Met will be changed from green to purple as we prepare for Easter.

The use of specific colours for liturgical seasons has a long history, with the first evidence of the practice dating back to the 12th century. Over time, they have gone through many changes before settling into the colours we use today. The United Church of Canada does not prescribe a particular set of colours; individual churches can tailor them to fit their needs. However, there is now a customary set of colours corresponding to seasons. This common set can be found in the table to the right.



Colour	Season / Day
Blue	Advent
White/Gold	Christmas, Easter, Maundy Thursday
Green	Ordinary Time (Epiphany/Pentecost)
Purple/Violet	Lent
Red	Palm Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, Good Friday
Orange	Creation Time
Black	Good Friday, Holy Saturday



These colours are used as they are meant to evoke a specific emotion or feeling. For example, green, the colour of Ordinary Time is traditionally the colour of peace, hope and anticipation. It is fitting that it is used during these seasons to **remind us of Jesus' teachings and miracles.** Purple, which is used during the time of Lent, represents mourning, sacrifice and lamentation, making it apt for the time when we reflect on **Jesus' time in the wilderness and his death at the hands of the Imperial Roman Empire.** Purple and violet are also traditionally associated with royalty, making them the perfect colours to represent our preparation for the Prince of Peace.

Both the natural seasons and the seasons of the church are dynamic and ever-changing, with ephemeral colours and beauty. The various colours of the liturgical cycle, along with music and scripture, stimulate our senses and allow us to connect more deeply with the word of God.

*Peter Chalmers*

## New Ways of Being Church

The Evolving Church Team has been working closely with the North Park Neighbourhood Association to provide support to the community (North Park) where our church resides. As you know, our church is located in the poorest neighbourhood in Victoria.

The team has been assisting with making and delivering sandwiches once per week to about 40 homeless folks in Central Park since last summer. Another member has been helping with the Grocery Hamper program out of the Fellowship Hall on Thursdays.

On Christmas Day, four team members delivered gift bags to the folks in Central Park, with items purchased from a donation of \$300 from the North Park Neighbourhood Association to our team. Gifts included socks, toques, homemade cookies, candy canes, a **\$10 McDonald's certificate**, chocolates, and mandarin oranges.

We are working on a vision for new ways of being church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and welcome anyone who wants to join the team. Some of what we would like to do will have to wait until we are free to gather again. For now, we meet via Zoom. Please contact me at [emilymacd@telus.net](mailto:emilymacd@telus.net) or 250-886-9975 if you want more information.

*Emily MacDonald, Chair*



## Christmas Treat Bags for Our Place Shelter Family



Thank you to all who generously contributed to the Our Place Adult Shelter Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve treats. **With your support we prepared 57** Christmas Eve gift bags for Our Place family members staying at the First Met shelter and at the Cool Aid Downtown Community Centre. Each gift bag was filled with two pairs of warm socks, chocolate, an orange, a candy cane, fresh cookies from two **local bakeries (Irene's Bakery and Esquimalt Bake Shop)**, and a McDonald's gift card. **We were also able to provide New Year's Eve snacks, in a safe, COVID-friendly manner, with an individual pizza and pop for each shelter resident.** Thank you again for your support!

*Kate Breckon*

# Advance Care Plan Program Via Zoom

Advance care planning is the process of thinking about and writing down your wishes or instructions for present or future health care treatment in the event you become incapable of deciding for yourself. The Ministry of Health in British Columbia encourages all capable adults to undertake advance care planning.

The Yakimovich Wellness Centre and the Victoria Hospice have created a two-part interactive and action-oriented Advance Care Plan (ACP) series that is delivered on the Zoom platform. Each session is 1.5 hours.

In these sessions, participants will learn to plan with confidence and acquire the tools and skills needed to start a conversation with friends, loved ones, and health care providers about their intentions for future health care treatment. Specifically, participants will:

- Define and understand important terminology for advance care planning in BC: Representation Agreement, Temporary Decision Maker, Advance Directive and Advance Care Planning.
- Understand the importance of identifying personal values, wishes and beliefs and creating an expression of wishes statement.
- Receive resources and tools for planning.
- Complete take-home assignments that encourage the completion of the Advance Care Plan.
- Learn communication strategies for approaching advance care planning topics with loved ones.
- Understand where to store their Advance Care Plan.
- Interact with others in their planning process through breakout rooms.
- Watch videos to further learning.

Registration is required for this series. Once registered, participants will receive suggested readings and a video to watch prior to the start of the first session. Participants will be encouraged to start thinking and deciding who their representative will be, consider the planning steps and begin filling in the forms.

*Please note:* Wills and Estates, Power of Attorney and other legal issues will not be covered in these sessions.

Victoria Hospice is offering Advance Care Plan sessions in February and March 2021. The February sessions will be held on Thursday, February 18 and Thursday, February 25, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The March sessions will be held on Monday, March 8 and Monday, March 15 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Registration information for the February sessions is posted on the following site: <https://victoriahospice.org/how-we-can-help/education-and-research/public-education/>

Wally Lazaruk



Looking for info on  
First Met events,  
either past or  
upcoming?

Check out our  
website

[firstmetvictoria.com](https://www.firstmetvictoria.com)

# Spiritual Care and Wellness News

The First Met Spiritual Care and Wellness Team donated \$4,000 in December 2020 to *Our Place Society* with funds made available through the Margaret Cameron Trust Fund.

The donation is assisting the New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community with their mental health and addictions efforts. The Recovery Community currently houses 26 men who have committed to intense transformation work for a minimum of nine months, and up to two years. The program, from intake to discharge, is divided into four stages and is outlined here:

<https://www.ourplacesociety.com/new-roads>

The donation from the Margaret Cameron Trust Fund is designated for three areas of support:

- **Enhancing Access to Education: \$2,000**  
The funds are being used for a dedicated computer station in the computer lab so that the residents can enrol in the South Island Distance Education School (SIDES) for online courses, upgrade skills and achieve a mature high school diploma, enrol in university programs, and/or obtain their First Aid/CPR and Food Safe handling certificates to enhance their employability.
- **Clinical Counselling: \$1,000**  
The funds are being used for clinical counselling by trained professionals to support residents with addictions in their healing journey.
- **Work as Therapy: \$1,000**  
The funds are enabling a specialist to train resident men in custodial care for the building and the maintenance work on site such as a green house, fish-pond and proposed chicken coop.



## Welcome Peter Chalmers!

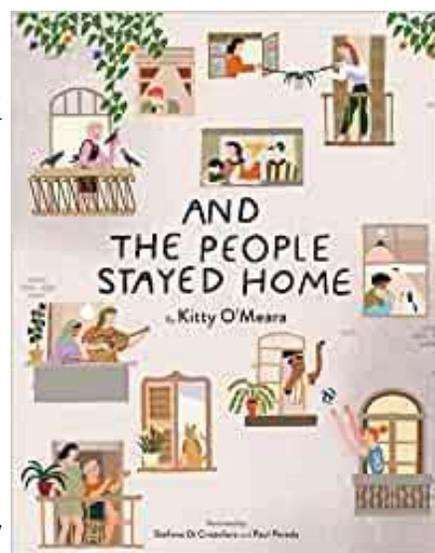
Just prior to Christmas, Ryan Lee finished his second cooperative education work term with First Met. January 4th we welcomed a new cooperative education student to our team. Peter Chalmers is an anthropology student at the University of Victoria who will be with us till the end of April 2021. He is part of the technical team at the back of the sanctuary each Sunday and also assisting the Communications team with a variety of other tasks. A couple of articles written by him appear in this newsletter.

We are delighted to have him join our team.

# “And the People Stayed Home”

By now, many of you have read the poem “And the People Stayed Home”, written by Kathleen (Kitty) O’Meara in the early days of the pandemic. Kathleen, a retired teacher and hospital chaplain, has a blog *The Daily Round: Living From the Spirit Level* (<https://the-daily-round.com/>). She posts poems, photographs and short essays on daily events and meditations on the Christian year. But none of her posts have had the impact of this poem, that spoke to the hearts of people facing the uncertainty of the pandemic, portraying the lockdown as a time of introspection and reflection, with the hope of a better time to come.

The poem was originally shared to a small circle of Facebook friends, but quickly she received many requests to share the poem more widely. As it circulated around the globe, it attracted the notice of celebrities like Oprah and Deepak Chopra. Oprah called her the “poet laureate of the pandemic”. Deepak Chopra said, “Kitty O’Meara...offers us wisdom that can help during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. She is challenging us to grow.” The poem was set to music, recited as a prayer, made into numerous short films, and translated into more than twenty languages.



Recently, the poem was published as a children’s book, with an animated version narrated by Kate Winslet. The work also appears in *America’s Poets Respond to the Pandemic*, an anthology curated by Alice Quinn, former New Yorker poetry editor. To read the poem and more about the author and her work, go to <https://wapo.st/39HBUnC>

## Celebrating a Double Baptism!



Katelyn and her son Lachlan were baptized by Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon on Sunday, January 31 in Langford. This beautiful little boy will be one year old this month.



### Thank You Note Received at the Church:

"Thank you so very much for bringing a beautiful silk poinsettia for Christmas. It was a strange time not attending church service and singing carols through Advent... Thanks for the phone calls as well, Shelagh and Fiona.

# First Met Children: The Light of the Christmas Star

What do curious, joyful, energetic kids get up to these days? For First Met Sunday school the answer is - a lot! In November and December the kids kept busy with their Advent Faith@Home kits, which are created by Sarah Prestwich and the others at the Pacific Mountain Region, First Third Ministry and filled with stories, recipes, games and crafts.



Thank-you to the Dube, Fraser, Biederman, Oliver/Breckon and Barnes families for carrying on the cherished tradition of lighting an Advent Wreath candle, this year with safety protocols and *lots* of creativity.

Our Family Christmas Eve service, created by Joan Mason and Ryan Lee, was a heartwarming compilation of past years, enjoyed in the comfort of our homes, and at noon on Christmas Day the First Met bells sounded through the neighbourhood with the help of two of our youth.

The new year is off to a wonderful start with the birth of baby Gemma to Meadow and Ryan, and proud Grandma Pat Dykes - a photo will be shared in our weekly family newsletter. New to our newsletter are birthday celebrations, word games, and news of a children's retreat and a young adult book club.



Hearts were warmed by the soft, colourful and cozy blankets given to our families in need of an extra hug, by our First Met knitting club - with our thanks!

February brings Pink Shirt Sunday February 21<sup>st</sup>, when **Reverend Shelagh will answer some of our kids' toughest questions** about kindness - with hand-held radios and the phonetic alphabet! Watch for our beautiful First Met Kids driftwood wreath, created especially for Pink Shirt Day, and so that we never drift apart .

We head into the new year with the light of the Christmas star in our eyes, as we learn about The New Creed, journey through the seasons of Lent and Easter, keep a close watch for our spring tulips that we planted in the church garden last fall, and think about summer camps and outdoor learning!

*Micia Kanstrup, Sunday School Coordinator*

# What's Up in North Park?

Although the COVID19 pandemic has slowed down a lot of activities for everyone, many new opportunities and ways of connecting have arisen and continue to grow and evolve. This is very evident in the North Park neighbourhood, in which First Met plays an important part.

The North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA) has seen many changes over the past year. In November, 2019, members voted in favour of hiring part-time administrative support, including a Community Coordinator. **This allows NPNA's elected board members to focus on decision-making, rather than housekeeping.** The Community Coordinator is Sarah Murray. She now has a new position, as Executive Director of NPNA.

In late 2019 and early 2020, the focus of **NPNA's work was on the planning for the replacement of the Crystal Pool.** There were many neighbourhood concerns about the impact of the plan on both Central Park and the **adjacent residential areas.** The **City's scope of equity and affordability considerations** regarding the project were criticized for being narrow and selective. NPNA gave a well-researched and comprehensive presentation to City Council on the significance of equity.

Other notable happenings during this time were: attendance and introduction of Shelagh **MacKinnon, First Met's lead minister, at the NPNA AGM;** a well-attended free public skate event at Save-On-Foods Memorial Arena, with some First Met members present as both volunteers and skaters; participation by NPNA board member Katie, with Baby George, as a candle-lighter at the ecumenical National Day of Action on Violence Against Women gathering, held at First Met on Dec 6, 2019.

Forward to March, 2020, when COVID changed the world. Like everyone else, NPNA had to change and adapt. Crystal Pool fell off the agenda. A few tents had begun to appear in Central Park in Autumn of 2019; now their number rapidly increased. Two Evolving Church Team members began working with NPNA to make and deliver sandwiches to the homeless population at Central Park. Several of the unhoused neighbours, who had taken on leadership roles within their community of campers, began working with NPNA on areas of



mutual concern. After December flooding, the Central Park unhoused residents were assisted by BC Housing and the City to move to the parking lot at Royal Athletic Park. NPNA volunteers helped to build wooden pallet bases for the tents. NPNA and other organizations hold weekly meetings with the unhoused neighbours.

**During the Summer months, NPNA's public meetings were held, safely distanced, in the bleachers at Royal Athletic Park. Attendance greatly increased from the "old normal", due to concerns about COVID-related changes in the neighbourhood.** Some unhoused neighbours attended and participated, along with various City council and staff members. When the **weather got colder, First Met's sanctuary** became our meeting place, until increasing pandemic restrictions forced us to switch to zoom meetings. Everyone was very appreciative of **First Met's generosity in providing space for as long as possible.** A member of our Evolving Church Team now is delivering juice and snacks to the RAP unhoused neighbours and the other participating groups, including NPNA, for their weekly meetings

The City of Victoria initiated *Get Growing, Victoria!*, a free seedling distribution project for marginalized residents who want to grow their own vegetables. NPNA helped to organize **our neighbourhood's distribution in Franklin Green, the small park on Mason Street, near Cook St.** First Met Evolving Church Team members were among the volunteers at Spring and Autumn 2020 distribution days.

NPNA had begun to participate in a free grocery hamper program, funded by grants; by late Summer NPNA needed a new location for its own part in this program. Beginning in

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# Walk the Talk on the Coldest Night of the Year



## It's not too late to join the Walk the Talk team

organized by Broad View United Church on a virtual walk to support Our Place. We will each plan and walk our own route, on the day and time of our choosing, with friends or alone.

The Coldest Night of the Year is a COVID-safe, family-friendly walk on February 20, 2021 to raise money for charities serving people experiencing homelessness, hurt, and hunger. Since 2011, the Coldest Night of the Year has raised over \$33,500,000 in 149 communities across Canada. The need to support our street family is even more necessary as the pandemics of opiate poisoning and COVID-19 take their toll.

While all will miss the fun of walking together as a group on the 2 or 5 km course, we can still walk individually in our own neighbourhoods and raise funds for Our Place. To register for the walk or donate to the team, go to <https://cnoy.org/location/victoriapandora>

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September, the FirstMet Fellowship Hall became that site on Thursday mornings. This cooperative undertaking by the church and NPNA is working very well.

NPNA also recently began hosting a **one day per month "Pop-Up Market"** featuring rotating local food vendors. The location and dates of these markets vary.

As you can see, despite the pandemic, there is a lot of activity in the North Park neighbourhood. We are very happy that our cooperative relationship has been growing and thriving!

If you want more information about NPNA, check out our website at [npna.ca](http://npna.ca), or contact Penny Bond, NPNA/First Met liaison at [moneypenny@shaw.ca](mailto:moneypenny@shaw.ca)

*Penny Bond*

## Heartfelt Thanks

Thank you to everyone who joined me in two Zoom sessions in late October to celebrate my 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

It was so heart-warming to see all your faces and to hear your kind words. It was a wonderful experience, especially now that so many of us have been away from Church life for such a long time.

A special thank you to Megumi Matsuo Saunders **who, with Moira Nasim's** collaboration, made these

two evenings so memorable. Also, I offer my thanks to those who sent me all the many beautiful birthday cards. I feel so privileged to have been remembered so beautifully and so well.

*With gratitude, Irene Baddeley*



# United Against Racism

February is Black History Month, the time where we celebrate the achievements, contributions and struggles of peoples of African descent. It is not a secret that racism is alive and permeates all levels of our society, from the personal to the systemic level. Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) have been disenfranchised and marginalized throughout history and these problems persist into the present. There is no easy solution to these issues, but one thing is clear: silence is not the answer. As a result of this, First Met is committed to becoming an anti-racist congregation and together with the United Church of Canada (UCC), we seek to deepen the church's anti-racism work.



## United against Racism

Credit: United Church of Canada

What does it mean to become an anti-racist congregation and at a larger scale, denomination? In October of 2020, the UCC published their anti-racism policy, That All May Be One (<https://bit.ly/3tkM8TM>), which names four key areas of work:

- Organize the full participation of peoples.
- Organize for diversity by supporting anti-racism work and promoting positive relationships among diverse peoples.
- **Act justly within the church's structures, courts, policies and practice.**
- Speak to the world by supporting anti-racism work within broader society.

We at First Met condemn all forms of racism and are working towards decolonizing our theology and participating in interfaith dialogue in an effort to create a welcoming community for peoples of all backgrounds. One example of how we are working

towards this is the Territorial Acknowledgement we do at the start of every service. We seek reconciliation between non-indigenous and indigenous peoples and denounce all forms of racial and religious bigotry including Islamophobia and anti-semitism. We recognize that our community is made up of peoples from many cultures and we seek to create an equitable environment where all voices are heard. We will continue to educate ourselves on the injustices present in our community so these aspirations can become a reality.

*Peter Chalmers*

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## What can you do to educate yourself about anti-racism?

Here are a few resources to start with:

- The United Church of Canada has policies, blogs and readings on its Anti-Racism webpage: <https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/anti-racism>
- Read “The Story of Slavery in Canadian History” (<https://humanrights.ca/story/the-story-of-slavery-in-canadian-history>)
- Read books by racialized authors on their experiences in Canada and elsewhere.
- Watch movies and documentaries on the subject of slavery (e.g. *13th* (about the impact of the 13th Amendment in the USA and *Harriet* (a movie about the life of Harriet Tubman), especially those that have been written by African-American authors.
- Read *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo which examines the defensiveness that white people exhibit when their ideas about race and racism are challenged.

# United Church Women News



The First Met UCW continues to seek new ways to meet our purpose of uniting the women of the congregation to the total mission of the church and to provide a medium through which they may express their loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship and service.

In keeping with the present restrictions, all UCW meetings are cancelled. We keep in contact with members through phone calls, cards, letter and emails.

**We support the “Reach One Touch One” Ministries (ROTOM) with** a yearly donation of \$720 to support two elders in Uganda. This provides medicine, personal hygiene supplies, a weekly meal, as well a regular contact regarding personal needs. The photo shows you some good news. Many of our Canadian-supported seniors received water drums because of money raised earlier this year. Pure joy, for those seniors who now have a safe supply of water after the rainy season. No one can steal the rain barrels because of the design.

Congratulations to UCW members Joan Dowse and Marion Denton for creating an inspiring Advent Readings and Prayers booklet!

Church staff received calendars and Christmas gifts from the UCW. There are a few 2021 Church calendars available. Email [emarie@shaw.ca](mailto:emarie@shaw.ca) or call the church office if you would like to purchase a copy.

*Marie McKee*



## In Memoriam



Vernon Richards, died Nov 21, 2020



Jim Anderson, died Dec 21, 2020



Rev. Gordon Cann, died Jan 17, 2021

We also mourn the loss of Deirdre Potter, who died November 27, 2020 and Mildred Grant, mother of Norma Truswell, who died Jan 26, 2021. Our condolences to the family and friends of all those who have passed away.

# Advent and Christmas Photos



Carols in the Candlelight featured prayers and readings by Shelagh MacKinnon, David Bray and Jean Jenkins as well as choral selections chosen by Kelly Charlton.

Left: Bullwinkle dressed for Advent

Below left: Lit candles on December 6.



## Parking Options

### Week Days

- Balmoral Road
- Ground Level ~ North Park - East of Balmoral Gardens Apartments

### Sundays

- Balmoral Road ~ Angle Parking
- Ground Level ~ East of Balmoral Gardens Apartments

Note that the building entrance from the Balmoral Gardens parking area is locked during the pandemic. Enter from Balmoral Rd.