

## **Congregational Letter from Rev. Shelagh MacKinnon**

### **August 17, 2021**

August is fast passing us. And what a month it has been for us here at Quadra at Balmoral - the late blooms of dahlias, asters and ever-blooming roses and hydrangeas, and still wearing masks and taking care. Thank you for the wonderful sense of community you all are showing as we navigate more uncharted waters!

Pat O'Keefe was remembered in a Celebration of Life that would have been impossible even just a few months ago. I know the family was grateful for the people who joined them to remember this father, grandfather and long-term member of the congregation. We will think of Pat's wife and family often in the days ahead.

I must say on a personal note how lovely it was to see the fellowship reception, hosted by a wonderful team of friends, being held in the Quadra Street garden! We are so blessed to have that garden and to see the tables set out where a beautiful breeze refreshed us all. Megumi, Moira, Lorna, Joan, Hayley, Lucy, Imogen, Leanne, May and Meadow greeted friends and served the luncheon treats. A huge thank you!!

The forest fires are something we could never have imagined; here, and in Europe, people seeing their homes and livelihoods destroyed. Many of us know the places in B.C. where the fires have ravaged the land. Our hearts go out to all the people and Creation so horribly affected. Our prayers for resilience today and healing in the future are with all the broken parts of the globe enduring the effects of global climate change.

It has been fabulous to see people back in our building. Our hearts and minds rejoice seeing family, friends and neighbours gathering together in ways that we have been unable to do for what seems like a very long time. As our Executive Secretary Treena Duncan reminds us, we are also aware of parts of the world that are still being ravaged by the effects of this disease and know that there is still much work to be done to end this worldwide pandemic.

I know there are only a limited number of opportunities as yet, but I feel the sense of hope and energy that is generated when folks greet each other in person (even if maintaining a social distance!) on Sunday mornings. It is still a little tentative at this time for people who are living with compromised immune systems and for that reason our livestream continues to be extraordinarily important!

This community of faith owes a huge debt of gratitude to the Communications Team of Joan Mason and David Bray, and our Sunday team of Trison, Ryan and Jodie. Jodie Brady-Quinton will be finishing her student co-op term with us at the end of August and she will be present on the 29<sup>th</sup> in worship as she reflects with me on her time here at First Met and its impact on her own faith journey. We have been blessed, during Covid, to have Ryan, Peter and Jodie serving as co-op students. We will welcome Lindsey on September 1 and we will introduce her more fully at a later date.

Our Mission Statement includes the heartfelt prayer that we be transformed by the Sacred Spirit. In these days of the tragic discovery of hundreds of graves at the Indian Residential Schools across Canada, we pray to be transformed into radical allies for the First Nations here on Vancouver Island and across BC and indeed Canada. That is an invitation to do our own homework, and as the summer worship services have demonstrated, we have taken that call to heart.

We are doing our homework in several ways: we have expanded the Territorial acknowledgement, we have added a Minute for Right Relations and we are including a relevant article from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission each week. We are taking this responsibility to educate ourselves seriously, and more opportunities will be announced in the fall. If you would like to give the Recognition, please just get in touch!

This coming Sunday is Holy Communion. If your family would care to, you are welcome to bring enough elements (bread and juice) for your crew. But we will be cautious just yet. Dr. Henry has expressed some concern about the potential for transmission when offering communion. As such, the Pacific Mountain Region still recommends single serving communion. We will have these little cups available on Sunday.

Well, my friends, I want to thank you for three years together! Yes, August 16, 2018, was my start with this congregation. I have often said we met on a blind date! I am so grateful to be in ministry here during all the “pivots” and changes of the pandemic! Thank you for your willingness to constantly and continually change with the worldwide pandemic.

I will see you soon, I trust. With the blessing of the Holy Spirit, I hope you will enjoy these blessed days of summer.

Shelagh