

**HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCH OF THE ADVENT**

PARISH OF COLWOOD & LANGFORD

Updated to 2016 November 6

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With edits, changes, additions
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ANGLICAN PARISH OF COLWOOD AND LANGFORD

PRE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT; prior to 1986

THE VERY EARLY DAYS

We trace our roots back to the first group of people who followed Jesus from AD 30 onwards. They shared his Good News, and the church grew rapidly. Within about 25 years English speaking Christians were gathering in Britain. By the year 300, they had church buildings, and served those in need in the community. Anglican Christians in Canada first met for worship in 1578.

There is mention in several old diaries, of services being conducted in the western communities as early as 1862, by the Rev. Robert Staines, chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Fort, and by the chaplains of the various warships when they were at anchor in Esquimalt Harbour.

As early as 1862, Anglican services were conducted in the Western Communities.

The area was considered part of the Parish of Metchosin and Sooke, after Confederation, a parish which stretched from View Royal to Jordan River. In 1912, this huge parish was broken up into 3, and our part became the Parish of Colwood and Langford.

Prior to this time, the parishioners in the village of Colwood had been meeting in the "Old Barn" on the site of the present Pioneer Cemetery. The "Old Barn" had been St. Matthew Presbyterian Church which was moved here from Craigflower in 1897. By 1908 the congregation had dispersed and the building reverted to the ownership of Alfred Peatt, on whose land it had been erected, and used for the storage of hay.

The Parish of Colwood and Langford was formed in 1912. St John Church (now a heritage building) was dedicated in 1913. The congregation in Langford dedicated their building in 1913 also, and built St Matthew church in 1924. Since 1978, the two congregations have been worshipping together as one church, using the St John's Church and Hall until 1986.

ST. MATTHEW

Parishioners in the village of Langford, had been meeting in various homes until 1911, collections were started to build a church hall, on land deeded by Alfred Taylor. The first service was held in this hall, called St. Paul's, on February 5, 1913. St. Paul's lasted until the "Great Snow" of 1916, when the building collapsed under the weight of the wet snow.

In Langford, with the loss of a place of worship, services were again held in various homes while money was raised to build a full church on the same property as St. Paul's Hall. Plans for this building were prepared by Mahor Spugin, and St. Matthew Church came into being as a cost of \$1,900 and as separate congregation within the Parish of Colwood and Langford. The first service was held on March 16, 1924 with the Rev. H. Pearson as Vicar of the Parish. The congregation of St. Matthew was by this time a total of 110 people.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

In Colwood, Alfred Peatt again donated land, across the lane from the old building, and St. John Church was built, for \$2,435. This building was dedicated on October 26, 1913, with the Rev. H.B. Hadlow as the Priest-in-Charge of both the church in Colwood and the hall in Langford. Bishop Roper and Rural Dean Baugh-Allen attended this dedication, along with all 36 parishioners and their families.

In 1923, a Churchyard was designated around St. John, with space for 100 graves. A vicarage was also built on Ledsham Road, both on land donated by Alfred Peatt. It was not until 1936 that the name St. John the Baptist was adopted.

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In 1953, the old vicarage was sold and the present Rectory purchased, together with the 5 acres surrounding it. The Parish became self-supporting in 1958.

THE TRANSITION TO THE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT

On Thanksgiving Sunday, 1978, the last service was held in St. Matthew, it being decided that it was not feasible to maintain 2 church and hall complexes in the same parish. The furnishings were put in storage and the building and land sold. The parish which had truly become one, officially worshipped together as a single congregation in St. John for the first time, the following Sunday, although joint services had often been held before.

Over the next 8 years, plans were made to build a larger church building to house our growing congregation, and modern hall to meet the needs and activities now associated with the church.

On Trinity Sunday, May 25 1986, the Rector, Rev. Joe Titus, led over 200 parishioners in procession from St. John the Baptist, past the site of the original St. Matthew to the new Church of the Advent. The Church of the Advent was Consecrated on the 1st Sunday in Advent, November 30, 1986.

Today, our church gathers to worship in modern (1986) facilities of Church of the Advent.

ABOUT THE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT

The building of the Church of the Advent was made possible by the forethought and generosity of our predecessors in the parish, in obtaining land that, in the case of St Matthews in Langford, could be sold for commercial purposes, and, in the case of St. John Colwood, was both big enough to house the complex we now have and provide for a facility located in the virtual centre of the residential area of the community.

The past is not forgotten, the cross on the Altar was given to the parish by the son of the original superintendent of Colwood Farm, Captain Edward Langford.

The furniture in the Chapel came from St. Matthew which stood in Langford.

THE PLANNING

In 1978 several ideas were considered. One idea was to move the St Matthew Church over to the St. John church and join the two. This idea was rejected for many reasons. The then Bishop Gartrell was instrumental in getting the parish to “re-think” the idea.

An Architect by the name of Harry Whitfield was retained by the parish to come up with some ideas and further concepts. He would be joined later by Ladi Halovyski.

St Matthew property was 2 acres and zoned Commercial. This valuable property sold for some \$430,000. The funds from the sale of the St Matthew property were invested by a parishioner and former banker, Don Beresford. The interest rates in the early 1980's were upwards of 19%. Over the next several years, Don made a whopping \$240,000 in interest to contribute to the Building fund.

With the Building Fund growing to a sizeable amount, the planning for the new Church of the Advent began in earnest.

During the early planning phase, it was discovered that the 5 acre St John property had been “blanket zoned” several years prior and was in fact zoned Residential and that the existing St. John Church and Hall was

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“Legally Non-conforming”. This meant that the property needed to be rezoned to allow the construction of the new church. This slowed progress.

During the rezoning meetings, some neighbours voiced concern that the proposed parking lot would be “right outside” their front room window. This turned out to be good fortune. The location of the church and parking lot was “flipped”. This placed the parking lot in its current location rather than adjacent to Glencarin Lane. Yeta Terrace was a dead end lane. Because of the new thinking related to the revised site plan a proposal was made to extend Yeta Terrace through to Glencairn Lane. This allowed an 8 lot subdivision to be considered with homes bordering both sides of Yeta Terrace. This led to the eventual sale of a strip of church property bordering both sides of Yeta. This residentially zoned property was sold as one parcel to a local developer and yielded a further \$188,000 for the Building Fund.

THE TENDER

The project was offered for public tender, a decision that would test the integrity of the parish core values. Several bids were received, Wheaton Construction was the low bidder. This caused problems as Wheaton Construction was fighting the Tsawout Indian Band, located on the east side of the Saanich Peninsula. Wheaton was proposing to build a marina which would be adjacent to the only remaining land occupied by the Indian band. The Anglican Church was supporting the Indian movement through Project North led by a parishioner, Mavis Gillis.

The parish building committee met with Bishop Ronald Shephard to review the situation and try to decide what the best decision might be related to having the Parish awarding a contract to Wheaton while having the main church supporting the fight against Wheaton.....what to do?

The Bishop suggested an evening dinner be arranged with the Building Committee, the Rector and himself to ponder and pray about what the next step might be. A delightful meal was prepared by Joan Titus, wife of the Rector with all in attendance at the Rectory. It was a long evening and in the end it was decided to award the contract to the 2nd bidder, Kinetic Construction. The difference between the low bid and the 2nd bid was only a few thousand dollars but this recommendation led to more problems.

A subsequent meeting was held with members of the A&F Committee and officials from the Synod office. It was decided at this meeting that the Synod lawyer would be given authority to negotiate up to \$25,000 with Wheaton Construction to make good any costs incurred by Wheaton for preparation of their tender. The negotiations were completed to the satisfaction of all parties. This paved the way for the award of the contract to Kinetic Construction.

*THE LITTLE PARISH THAT COULD....AND DID! - by Mavis Gillie
The following information was written by Mavis Gillie in March 1986.*

This is the story of a parish on the outskirts of Victoria which, as the local newspaper later editorialised, had “a close encounter of a spiritual kind”.

The lively congregation of St. John the Baptist, Colwood, has long out-grown its country pioneer, white frame place of worship, and the hall seemed fast becoming part of the surrounding woodland graveyard. ON the drawing board were plans for a bright new building, money was in hand and, led by their determined Rector, the congregation had cleared one hurdle after another in preparation for the day when construction would commence. Finally one day in June 1985 plans went to tender.

When the bids were opened the lowest was from a local contractor who, it happened, had plans to build a marina in a small bay adjoining an Indian reserve just north of Victoria. The Tsawout Indian Band had lived under the threat of the marina for twelve years and vehemently opposed the proposal. IN 1852 Governor James Douglas has made a treaty with them. For their land each family was paid compensation amounting

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to about 2 pounds 10 shillings, and it was understood that the Indians “would retain their right to hunt over unoccupied land and to carry on their fisheries as formerly”.

The unoccupied lands had long since disappeared as European settlers pre-empted field and forest, but Saanichton Bay continued to provide food and spiritual sustenance for these coastal people as it had done for thousands of years. Now, with 75% unemployment on the reserve and no economic base, the loss of the bay would be devastating. Their backs to the wall, the Tsawout people appealed to Project North and their home parish for help.

Over the years the contractor had acquired legal opinions stating that the Indians has no special rights and approached various levels of government for permits to go ahead with his plans. Upset by the churches’ support of the Indians, he stated to the press that it didn’t matter what the Church said, or the Indians, but only whether his project made economic sense.

The Parish Council was in a quandary. The low bid was attractive, but the man’s stated position clearly was in opposition to Anglican Church policy. Delegates to General Synod in August 1977 passed a resolution “reaffirming support of the native people in their efforts to obtain justice through recognition of treaty , aboriginal and other rights”. Further, the Anglican Church was one of the founders of Project North, the interchurch coalition in support of native peoples’ growing trust in the churches. On the other hand, some argued, the construction community would be greatly offended if the Church allowed such considerations as the contractor’s other interests to influence what was, after all, purely a business agreement. Progress has to happen they said, the Indians have to accept it. The parish and diocese took time to consider.

Meantime the press picked up the story and morning headlines shocked good folk who weren’t used to having Church affairs thus publicised. “Contractor accused Anglicans of ‘Blackmail’ over Church bid” led off the first page, and another: ‘Church’s marina stand likened to witchhunt’. Then the contractor threatened to sue. “What we are seeing”, said the editor of the Times Colonist, “are painful encounters which follow when members within religious communities endeavour to apply the teachings of their church to current issues in the secular world”.

The Bishop had been on holiday, and on his return arranged that he and the Parish Council would come for dinner at the Rectory where we would “break bread together” and decide our course of action as the people of God. IN the prayerful discussion of that summer evening there was no question of who were the poor and dispossessed. It was clear the cost of justice could not be measured in dollars and cents. To be faithful in our situation , that must be at the heart of our decision. It was decided unanimously to accept the second lowest bid.

Months later at the Parish Annual meeting, during discussion of finances, the question was raised, “What was the final outcome of the controversy?” The Rector’s Warden smiled and, without a pause, replied, “The final outcome was that we, as a parish, having been put to the test, have been immeasurably strengthened in our faith and understanding.”

THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE

All along the way the parish tried to “get some good press” concerning the construction project. The local newspapers were not too interested until one day particular day during construction. The roof trusses for the main worship area arrived on site and were place on the top of the framed walls. When the carpenter climbed up the trusses and released the metal straps that secured the bundles of trussed together, the trusses “sprung” and came crashing to the ground. The carpenter was slightly injured, but no one seriously hurt. Needless to say the media arrived and we “got some press”..

The second encounter with the press occurred when the Developer that bought the property on Yeta Terrace began clearing trees. The only fallers that could be found began work on a Saturday morning. The neighbours were not made aware of the extent of the clearing that would be needed for the new homes. They

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were angry. The article in the paper the next day read.... "Church Acts in Bad Faith". The papers thought it was the Church that was doing the tree removal when in fact it was the developer. And so it went.

CLEAR TITLE BEFORE THE CONSECRATION.

The building fund was short about \$20,000 in order to finish the entire project. Rather than borrow money and incur a debt, it was decided to ask the parishioners if they would offer blocks of \$500 or \$1,000 to be repaid as some future date by way of Promissory Notes from the church. Bob Brandle, a member of the Building Committee, took it upon himself to "phone everyone on the parish list". This was done and the money was raised in 2-3 weeks. This allowed the entire project to be totally paid for with no encumbrances. As per Canon policy, the way was clear to consecrate the facility.

HOW THE CHURCH GOT Its NAME

Everyone knew it would be difficult naming the new church in view of the fact that we were joining St. Matthews and St John. What should the new name be? It was decided that if anyone had any suggestion about what the new name should be that they submit their suggestion in writing to the Building Committee. A good number of suggestions were received. It was decided to meet as a group and try and come to an agreement as to what the new name should be; no small task! The traditional "Saint This" and "Saint That" were proposed. It was becoming difficult until the Bishop suggested that a church in Chicago was named "Church of the Advent".

This suggested really united everyone. It was "new", neutral in nature, broke the tradition, and suggested a new vision. It was planned to consecrate the facility in November of the year just as we enter the season of Advent. It was agreed; Church of the Advent.....expectation.

St Matthew Furnishings

The important furnishings were removed from the Church and Hall prior to demolition by the new owner. The Reredos, Altar, Altar Rail, stained glass, and other wall hangings were stored in the St. John Hall until required in the new construction. The Chapel located in the Church of the Advent is fitted up with the furnishings from the original St. Matthew Church. The Baptismal Font in the Chapel was actually discovered by a weekend work party. A group was working behind the St. John Hall and discovered the font laying in thick grass and bushes! No one is sure how it got there, but they sure knew what it was and where it should be moved.

Beth McLean's detailed photo album of the construction- 1985-86 complete with some early photos of St. Matthew and St. John.

RECTORS OF THE PARISH OVER THE YEARS

H.B. Hadlow	1912-1924
H. Pearson	1924-1927
H.B. Allen	1927-1928
H.St. J. Payne	1928-1929
A.L. Nixon	1929-1932
H.St. J. Payne	1932-1933
A.M. Acheson-Lyle	1933-1936
M.W. Bruce	1936-1937
R. Yerbrough	1937-1940
P.J. Disney	1940-1942
G.H. Greenhalgh	1942-1947
H.J. Jones	1947-1957

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J.F. Page	1957-1959
D.A. Hatfield	1959-1964
P.W.R. Isles	1964-1968
W.J. Lunny	1968-1970
B.A.J. Cowan	1970-1970
J.G. Titus	1970-1995
Dr. D.J. Rolfe	1995-2006
Ken Gray	2006-2016
Sandra Hounsell-Drover	2016- Present

*THE 9TH JUAN DE FUCA SCOUT GROUP- A BRIEF HISTORY- by Stan Horner
The following information was written by Stan Horner in November 1983.*

The St. Matthew church, Langford, received a Charter to operate as sponsor of a Scout group on September 26, 1961. This was not, however, the start of scouting at St. Matthew, the 1st Langford troop having met in St. Matthew hall for many years under the leadership of Howard Smedley, Hamish Bullen R.N., the great grandson of Dr. John Helmcken and son of a pioneer Langford family, and later under the leadership of the late Bill Reith, all members of the parish.

At the time of formation of the 9th the scout troop had moved to Gordon United to be the nucleus of the 1st, and initially the 9th has only a Cub Pack. The first Cub Master was Bob Boad, assisted by Percy Horel. Percy Horel designed the crest for the group scarf, and the original design which for many years was in St. Matthew is now in St. John Church, Colwood. It is interesting to note that Percy Horel's birthday was the same date as the Founder's. The Cub pack has operated continuously, and is very active at the present time.

The Cub pack has always taken part in regional and district events, and has attended all of the Juan de Fuca District Cub camps. At the time that St. Matthew hall was closed the pack moved to Savory School where it stayed for two years before moving to St. John where it and other sections now meet.

A scout troop was formed in 1963 and operated until about 1976 when it folded for lack of boys and leaders. It was reactivated in September 1980 by Stan Horner with 5 boys who came up from the pack at a ceremony at the District Cub Camp at Camp Barnard the previous June. The troop has now 10 boys and 3 leaders.

A Beaver Colony was added to the group in September 1978 with 2 leaders and 5 boys. Mike and Mae Juleff were the first leaders. Mike is still active with the Colony and has 4 assistants and 25 boys.