

Celebrating the Communion

As I listened to Dean Robert's morning prayer on the morning of the Lunar New Year, I was walking under towering hemlocks and cedars in the endless forest that blankets the northern boundary of North Vancouver in British Columbia.

"Endless" may be an exaggeration, but not by much. The swaths of dense, uninterrupted forest that abut our community are part of the millions of hectares of coastal rainforest for which our province is famous. It is not uncommon to look out of one's front window to see a bear or coyote wandering down the street; it is (thankfully) less common, but by no means rare, to hear from neighbours who have just spotted a cougar in their back yard.

But that morning, as I ducked off the street for a walk in the woods, I was not thinking of cunning cougars, broody bears, or curious coyotes, but how novel it was to hear the words of the psalm and prayers read to the accompaniment of music from China. At St. Clement's, where I am deacon, our liturgies largely reflect the inherited tradition of the English church. But as I listened to the psalm that morning through my earbuds, the words landed differently than usual, shaped by melodies to which my ear was unaccustomed.

This raincoast community, into which I was born over 50 years ago, has all the familiarity of home. The bears that I appreciate but take for granted very likely seem thrillingly novel to others — and so it is for me when I get stimulating glimpses into the geography and culture of other lands and peoples.



The Rev. Peggy Trendell-Jensen, deacon, and the Rev. Helen Dunn, priest, at St. Clement's Anglican in North Vancouver, British Columbia, display a map of the Anglican Communion and the greeting "Peace be with you" in Japanese.

As I absorbed the music and spectacle carefully chosen by Fletcher that morning to reflect the celebrations of the Lunar New Year, I wondered what it would be like if we at St. Clement's occasionally enhanced our own church services, and even social events, with elements from different cultures. Would we experience the scriptures differently? Would our silent and spoken prayers become more expansive? Not only might our congregation benefit from the added exposure to different music, prayers, food and art, but it could also help us create a welcoming environment of greater inclusivity.

Our clergy team discussed this and realized we had a built-in reason to be especially attentive to other cultures this year - the Lambeth Conference! We decided to spend the upcoming months celebrating the worldwide Anglican Communion whenever we found the

chance. We challenged ourselves (and our music director) to look for ways to weave multicultural influences into our liturgies, sermons and songs. And we invited the congregation to join us with their own ideas.

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We introduced our Lambeth Year on the Sunday morning in which the Communion happened to be praying for the Nippon Sei Ko Kai - the Anglican Church in Japan. We learned that it takes three years to pray through the 800-plus dioceses that make up the Communion. We exchanged the peace in Japanese ("Shuno heiwa!") And we gathered outside after the service to take a photo greeting to send to all of you at Canterbury Cathedral - which, as Dean Robert has at times reminded us, can be thought of as the "kitchen" of the Anglican Communion.

We may not be able to "visit" all the 165 countries of the Communion this year, but we look forward to experiencing as many as we can, in one way or another. The seed planted during that service of morning prayer from the deanery garden is already bearing fruit - so thank you for that, Canterbury! Should you ever be in our neck of the woods, our door is always open (just watch out for the bears!)

The Rev. Peggy Trendell-Jensen
Deacon, St. Clement's Anglican Church, North Vancouver, British Columbia

The St. Clement's congregation was willing to forego Coffee Hour long enough to head outside for a photo greeting to send everyone at Canterbury Cathedral.



In introducing St. Clement's Lambeth year, Peggy displays a map of the world and reflects how easy it is to become inattentive to our neighbours in faraway places.