

Celebrating St Anne's, West Heath 125th

Greetings from Canada! Hi everyone at St Anne's, and congratulations as you celebrate 125 years of a church on this site. I am sorry that I am unable to share in this important occasion with you in person, but I will be there with you in spirit!

I have so very many happy memories of my times with St Anne's. I am always pleased to hear news of the parish and many of you still keep in touch. You are all very special folk and close to my heart!

I was an ordained minister at St Anne's for 15 years from 1988 to 2003: initially as Assistant Curate to the Reverend Barrie Green from 1988 until 1996, then as Vicar from 1996 until 2003 when the family moved to British Columbia Canada .

We shared very many happy years at St Anne's including the births of our girls: Lara in 1991 and Anya in 1994. Whilst at St Anne's, I was one of the first women priests to be ordained in the Church of England. I was eight months pregnant with Anya at the time and delayed my maternity leave so that I could preside at my first service of holy communion with you all. Thank you for sharing that unique and special occasion with me!

I remember when we celebrated St Anne's Centennial in October 2000. I had inadvertently double booked the weekend of the celebrations by arranging the wedding of Chrissie Arnold and Rod Price on the Saturday of that weekend. Chrissie will recall her horror when we realized my mistake! I remember going "cap in hand" to the PCC to apologize and discuss what we should do. Fortunately the understanding PCC delayed the church Centennial celebrations by a week, much to the relief of Chrissie and Rod and myself!

One of the very positive things that we did during the Centennial celebrations, was to raise funds for the building of a school for children in Uganda: a project spear-headed by Eileen Tudor. We had various fundraising events and the community of West Heath also contributed to this task. As I recall, we exceeded our goal in fundraising and a second story to the school building was added. How wonderful to do this as a church as a centennial gift and to make such a difference for these children.

It was a privilege, then, to be one of a ministry team of Five: our Curate, Mike Sermon; licensed readers Eileen Tudor and Ian Bradley, Lay pastoral assistant Joan Ayre, and myself.

A number of fun events at St Anne's over the years come to mind: the time that we had a bouncy Castle at the back of the church during the St Anne's church Bazaar! The performance of plays like the *Snowman* and the *Lion King*. Chris Clapham's recorder and guitar groups that so many, young people in particular, enjoyed. *Socks*, the cat who brought himself to church and sat on the altar rail. Not to mention being able to share in the happy events of Births, Baptisms, Marriages and Confirmations. Also the privilege of taking

celebration of life services for loved ones from the parish such as Kathleen Higgs: Licensed Reader at St Anne's for many years.

During my time with you the George Goodger Hall was built, the Child Access Centre opened and a Food bank established. We opened the church foyer for people to come in, sign remembrance books, lay flowers and pray following the death of Princess Diana, and 911. We were very blessed with church members willing to facilitate these important projects and engage in outreach of the church.

So what are we folk in Canada doing now?

Most of you will know that Don, my husband of 32 years, died in March 2020 at the age of 70 as a result of pancreatic cancer. He loved St Anne's too, and would want you to know that!

Lara is married to Coulter and they have 3 children: Ellie 8, Lucy 6 & Maverick 19 months. They live in Calgary, Alberta. Lara is a stay at home mum and home schools the kids.

Anya is a certified Hypnotherapist and Professional Counselor. She is currently in Nelson, BC but plans to move to Peachland with her boyfriend soon. Yeah!

I retired last October but still take one or two services each month at St Margaret's, Peachland as we have no Incumbent. Like many small churches we rely on retired clergy and Lay Ministers for church services and to provide pastoral care in the parish.

I am so grateful for all my years at St Anne's. I felt dearly loved and valued by you all. I think of St Anne's often and my prayers are with you as you celebrate this 125 year milestone.

God be with you and continue to bless you in the years ahead

With very much love,
Sue