

Fr. David John

Provincial Spiritual Advisor (*Again!*)

Early Years and Education

I was born in the South West of England in a small village. We had a farm on one side and a market garden on the other. It was rural.

I hated school and being dyslexic I did not do well. My father was the principal of the high school I attended, and my mother was also a teacher there. To get me through school they had to mercilessly shove an education into me – *for which I am now very grateful*. I gained just enough grades to get to university.

At this point things started to look up and my next four years of study gained me an honours degree in Mathematics (*which I think would be the equivalent to a Masters in North America*). This gave me an opening to work in the ‘Lloyds of London’ insurance market as an ‘information analyst’. With technology advancing and the economy booming this was a good time for the Lloyds market and for many of us who were working there. Yet I would look at the colleagues I worked with and wouldn’t see people who looked like me; we were having fun, but I wasn’t feeling fulfilled.

Into Priesthood

With nothing to lose I sold up and went off to seminary. And again, while I struggled to recognise an image of myself in the somewhat aloof and very academic priests who taught us, I started to see in the Church’s description of priesthood a vision of something attractive, enticing and meaningful. I have to admit that my six years at seminary were a real struggle, but on 28th October 1989 I was ordained to the priesthood. Ordination to the priesthood is not an end point, it is very much a starting point.

For my first ten years of ministry I worked in my home diocese of Plymouth, which covers the South-West of England – *the counties of Devon, Dorset and Cornwall*. In this time I was fortunate to be able to experience a variety of different ministries, from youth work to being chaplain to an enclosed order of nuns. I had the most wonderful bishop anyone could have, Bp. Christopher Budd, who retired in 2013. He was a real father to me and to the whole diocese.

Our diocese had traditionally supplied a number of priests to parishes in Kenya, but by the 1990’s they weren’t needed as, wonderfully, Kenya had an abundance of priests. So Bp. Christopher decided to offer a priest for ministry in another part of the world where there was a shortage, and that was Canada. As I knew Canada well – *having travelled from coast-to-coast-to-coast* – I was the priest chosen for this mission as a ‘Fidei Donum’ priest.

For my next ten years I served in the Prince George diocese, in the north-eastern corner of B.C. in the mountainous area around Chetwynd & Tumbler Ridge up to the dams near Hudson’s Hope. Here I first met people from the First Nations community and could not believe how warmly they embraced me. I would have happily stayed in these parishes for the rest of my life, that was how much I felt at home.

Then in 2009 I was moved to the diocese of Nelson where I looked after the Slocan Valley for seven years and then the Elk Valley which includes Fernie and Sparwood, for another seven years.

By 2023 the Nelson diocese had enough priests to cover all their parishes, so my home diocese of Plymouth then offered my ministry to the Victoria diocese and I was appointed to the very top of Vancouver Island which had been without a priest for some years, and this is where I am now. The North Island Pastoral Area covers about a quarter of the landmass of Vancouver Island, but is sparsely populated. We have four very small churches across the area, one being on an island off the coast of Vancouver Island. And once more I find myself in an area which I love and in which I feel very much at home.

Back in 2018 I had been asked to be the B.C. and Yukon Provincial Spiritual Advisor to the CWL, a role I held for five years, and what fun we had during those years! It was such a joy to journey in faith with the CWL, particularly through the challenges of Covid. Therefore when in 2026 I was asked to pick up this role again for just one year, I jumped at the chance.

Travel and Solitude

My parents were great travellers and took me all over Europe and beyond. Also, I took a year off between school and college (*as one does*) and went around the world – *literally* – getting as far as New Zealand. By the time I was twenty-one I had visited twenty-one different countries, and at some point I remember visiting my thirtieth country, but after that I lost count of the countries and lost any interest in going to yet another new place.

Now what I like doing is driving off with my dog into the middle of nowhere. Any month of the year I am happy to disappear into the bush with my dog, my truck-camper and my mountain bike to find a bit of solitude. And where do I want to go on holiday? Vancouver Island sounds nice, particularly that sparsely populated northern bit! My '*If-I-won-the-Lottery...*' dream is not a sports car or yacht, but a small, simple cabin in the middle of nowhere, or at least a real four-seasons camper! I really enjoy the stillness and silence!

Ministry

As a priest there is so much I am not good at: paperwork, meetings, organising, and much more; but I try to exercise the ministry of presence – just being there for people. So I take my dog, camper and bike to some of the smaller communities in the north of the Island and just be about.

What I particularly enjoy in my ministry is liturgy along with exploring the scriptures. And I have an overriding belief that building God's Kingdom does not depend upon us, we are just channels for God; we should let the scriptures and the liturgy be the voice, and trust that God will speak through His Word and touch people through His Sacraments. I so much believe that if we as a worshiping community, *priests and people together*, could get these right, then others will know, understand and believe.

I feel it is a privilege to again be the B.C. and Yukon Provincial Spiritual Advisor.

