



# ST MARY OF THE INCARNATION

Incorporating St Mary the Virgin Heritage Church, Metchosin BC

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## PARISH PROFILE

Living the Gospel.  
Engaging God's World.



## **Living the Gospel**

At our Diocesan Transition Day we identified the following needs in the Metchosin area:

1. Building Families
2. Supporting Seniors
3. Environmental work

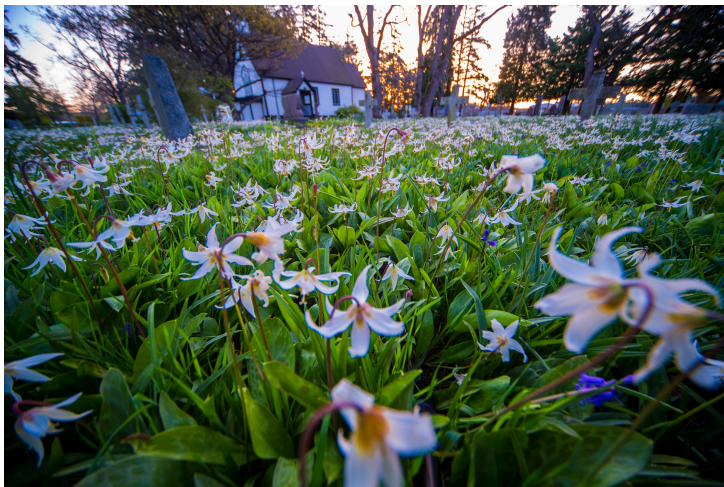
St. Mary's Metchosin is one of the oldest parishes in BC, and we are active in the Diocese of Islands and Inlets known as the Diocese of British Columbia. The theological tremors that shook the Anglican Church resulted in a significant number of people falling away from St. Mary's leaving a small core group of believers.

Rebuilding is taking place and we want to continue our growth, by serving the Lord and our community. It is not an easy task, but with God's power working in us we can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Part of what we imagine is a church built on God's loving grace, a welcoming community of friends, nourished by the Lord.

We are part of the Sacred Journey of our diocese becoming a Renewed People with Renewed Hearts and Spirits. We are engaging three areas, Faith in Foundation, Faith in Action and Faith in Formation.

### **1. Faith in Foundation**

Our parish includes two churches. The small heritage church St. Mary the Virgin is more than 140 years old and is used for some Sunday services and occasional community weddings or funerals. Its grounds include a cemetery which draws crowds every spring as the churchyard is filled with thousands of wild lilies.



Our regular Sunday meeting place is St. Mary of the Incarnation, a large modern multi-purpose church situated in a naturally beautiful location on a large lot. We also rent out space in St. Mary of the Incarnation to community groups for various events. We have one pre-school and two out of school programs running in our facilities and we also host a vacation bible school in the summer.

When possible we partner with other agencies in the community to work on emergency preparedness, search and rescue support, immigrant and refugee support and we assist the local Seniors Information and Resource Centre.

Our location in the rural community of Metchosin can best be described as idyllic. Our main site is right next to one of the region's most popular parks and has drawn the attention of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network as a potential centre for the ministry Creation Matters.



Our church demographics lean towards those with grey hair, but those are the parishioners that provide most of the financial support towards St Mary's. Our church budget has been trimmed over the past several years and we are currently using reserve funds to meet our obligations. (See attached documents)

## **2. Faith in Action**

For decades one of our most popular "open door" events for community outreach has been the Blackberry Festival. It's essentially a harvest festival where volunteers make and sell blackberry pies and serve tea to people attending the event. The festival allows us to reach out to people who ordinarily don't attend church, and it is also a good source of revenue. Here is a short synopsis of some of our other ministries:

- Prayer Shawl Ministry – hand knitted shawls for people struggling with disease or loss.
- Prayer Chain
- Food Bank support and donations
- Supporting "Our Place" a regional centre offering help the homeless and destitute
- Pastoral Care for Brothers and Sisters
- Sunday services
- For Lent we hosted a well - attended series that focused on sustainability, locally and abroad.





There are several areas that could provide growth for our congregation but perhaps the most promising are the many new urban housing developments nearby. We have an active Deacon and now we need someone who brings new ideas on how to build a more vibrant parish that is relevant to people who don't regularly attend church. Leveraging the natural beauty of our location may help in attracting people from surrounding

urban developments. We are likely the only South Island church that still draws farm animals to the annual "blessing of the animals" Sunday. Opportunities for growth can be found by engaging God's world where people live, including within the Scia'new First Nation, at Pearson College, and at the William Head Penitentiary.

### **3. Faith in Formation**

As a congregation, at this point we are below the critical mass required to expand our programs. But we have three things that makes growth possible; ideas, volunteers, and a faith in God. We seek a Christ focused pastor, a partner and a leader who is ready for a new adventure serving God and his Church in 2017. We have a small but growing Sunday school program that we believe is one of the keys to our future.

With three dedicated families and occasional attendees, the hope is that within two years St. Mary's will be running Sunday programs for children of all ages. Preaching an inspirational message with a focus on how to live as a Christian in today's world is the foundation of a vibrant church – but our future is children and families. On our best days, the sound of children echoes in our sanctuary.





## History of the Anglican Church in Metchosin

Though services for settlers in Metchosin took place as early as 1850, it was not until 1873 that the church of St. Mary the Virgin became the place for those services. The establishment of St. Mary the Virgin was made possible by donation of the land by a leading farmer in the area, John Witty, and donation of money by none other than Sir James Douglas, an occasional resident of Metchosin. The church and attached cemetery have played a central role in the life of Metchosin since that time. The old church and grounds are maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers and St. Mary the Virgin continues to be used for special services.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Harry Silvester, the old church flourished in the 1970's and by 1974 became self-supporting, ceasing to be a mission church in the Diocese. Three services took place each Sunday and outreach to the community included the sponsorship of 11 Vietnamese boat people in the late 1970's. Attendance continued to increase, partially as a result of many young families in the area and by the mid 1980's it was recognized that the congregation needed a larger facility more suitable to the needs of a modern church. An enlargement to the old parish hall proved insufficient and with the prospect of significant population increases in the surrounding area, the decision to build St. Mary of the Incarnation was made, assisted by the donation of the land by the grand-daughter of John Witty.



St. Mary of the Incarnation was completed in 1991, thanks in part to countless hours of volunteer labour being contributed to the construction effort. The church in Metchosin continued to thrive in the new building though by early in the new millennium, turmoil between more conservative and more liberal members of the Anglican Church in Canada had spread to Metchosin.

In 2008, this turmoil resulted in a large percentage of parishioners leaving St. Mary's to join ANiC, leaving fewer than 20 to maintain the activities of the ACC in Metchosin.

Thanks to assistance from the Diocese of B.C., some very effective interim ministers and some very dedicated parishioners, the numbers gradually increased to the extent that Sunday attendance at most services regularly exceeds 40 and a small but growing Sunday School has been established.

A more detailed history of St. Mary's can be found at <http://www.stmarysmetchosin.ca>