

The Reverend Wilmer Toyoken’s 10th Anniversary Celebrations at St. Michael’s Multicultural

Saying Farewell to the Reverend Eric Stroo & Welcoming the Right Reverend Alex Wandag

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The Rev. Wilmer Toyoken began his tenure at St. Michael’s, Vancouver aka St. Michael’s Multicultural (SMM), November 15, 2011. On two consecutive Sundays, November 7 and 14, 2021, the parish celebrated the 10th Anniversary of his incumbency. The occasion was enhanced by the confluence of two other significant events in the life of St. Michael’s, saying good-bye to their deacon of 4 ½ years, Deacon, the Rev. Eric Stroo and welcoming a new honorary assistant, a retired bishop, the Rt. Rev. Alex Wandag.

Ten Years — Ezra, Rose & Padi Wilmer

The celebration of Padi Wilmer’s ten years of ministry at St. Michael’s marked an auspicious date for him, his family, and St. Michael’s. The ten years preceding his arrival the parish did not have a term priest-in-charge (the last five of those years with supply clergy), the progress of the church since Padi Wilmer’s arrival is visible everywhere. In an early homily, Padi Wilmer emphasized *servant leadership*. Ten years later, that two-word philosophy has captured unerringly the guiding culture of his leadership style, and the style of the leadership team and congregation. Nourishing this culture is the source of all else accomplished during his ten years. The second most visible manifestation of that success are SMM’s four primary ministries. When Padi Wilmer was appointed priest-in-charge in 2011, there was only one meal ministry, now there are several examples of compassionate food service. Over the years he has added a robust youth/children’s ministry, a strong Anglican Communion Asian Pacific Ministry (ACAM) in partnership with The Episcopal Church (TEC), an Evening Prayer program (now in existence for six years), and a four-year (so far) covenanted partnership with the Mission to Seafarers.

The Youth/Children’s Ministry has been especially strong. Highlights include the trip made by 18 youth in 2019, to an Anglican Communion event in Hawaii. They were accompanied by then-archbishop of the diocese of New Westminster, the Most Rev. Melissa Skelton and the Rev. Eric Stroo. The dedicated effort of the Toyoken family made this possible. Padi Wilmer’s spouse, Rose Toyoken

was the organizing force behind this event, as well as a 2019 event in California. This program is guaranteed a strong future with Rose’s continuing leadership and energy, as well as a \$5,000 annual gift from Sam Copley. The grant began in 2020.

And finally, their son Ezra has been a fixture at Evening Prayer, and is part of the Sunday liturgy, where he rings the Sanctus bell to mark the “*do this in Remembrance of me*” points of the Eucharistic Prayer.

The plaque reads as follows:

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE SERVANT-LEADERSHIP of the Reverend Eric Stroo, Deacon, 2017 – 2021

With deep gratitude, for his support of Padi Wilmer, for his trip to the Philippines, for his support in establishing SMM’s 4th Ministry (Mission to Seafarers), for his many Sermons and Gospel Readings, for his easy Grace after Church during meal fellowship, for his Wisdom during Church Council and Vestry, and For his continued Zoom presence over the first 18 months of the COVID Pandemic (March 2020 – November 2021)

The congregation and leadership of SMM face Eric’s departure with heavy hearts, but know we will see him & Melissa on occasion, and want to emphasize strongly how welcome you (both!) will always be, as permanent members of the SMM St. Michael’s Multicultural Anglican Church family

4 ½ Years — Deacon, The Reverend Eric Stroo

In addition to the Toyoken family’s anniversary, SMM marked the occasion of the Rev. Deacon Eric Stroo’s final day at SMM. There was a ½ hour slide show with music that was produced by People’s Warden James Baldo, ODNW. The soundtrack captured Eric’s penchant for dancing! In addition to being presented with a healthy supply of bubbly (how do you get that across the border, Eric?), he was presented with a plaque by the Rector’s Warden, Moses Kajoba ODNW. The words on that plaque summarize

Eric’s contributions to SMM in his time in ministry. Bishop John Stevens sent a letter to Padi Wilmer to be read out to the congregation on the occasion of his last day. He perfectly captured the sentiments of the congregation at SMM.

The Right Reverend Bishop Alex Wandag

The preacher for the double occasion of the 10th Anniversary of Padi Wilmer and the farewell for Deacon Eric was the Rt. Rev. Bishop Alex Wandag. Bishop Alex’s message was most memorable, sealed with a single clap/stomp for Padi Wilmer, and a double clap/stomp for Deacon Eric. Auspiciously, it marked the first participation by Bishop Alex in a St. Michael’s Multicultural (SMM) liturgy since receiving a letter from Bishop John granting him a license and Permission to Officiate. The deep hole left by the departure of Deacon Eric will be felt for a long time, but it was felt that the Lord provides in wonderful ways in sending Bishop Alex to us as a sign of new beginnings. Bishop Alex faithfully accepted the endorsement of the eight SMM Wardens/Trustees at Vestry, in becoming SMM’s honorary assistant.

As many are aware, an initiative of the diocese of New Westminster has been Companion Diocese relationship with the Episcopal diocese of Northern Philippines. Bishop Alex is recently retired from that area of the Philippines and joins a congregation that he has visited many times over the last 15 years, where he has always been very active in the musical ministry of the church. His wife Grace is an active member of SMM and was the first leader of the Anglican Church Women (ACW) when it was re-established in 2012. As of this writing Grace is currently covering for the President, Judith Carling, who is undergoing treatment for cancer. A primary emphasis of Deacon Eric in his final speech was a *shout out* to the ACW as the “heart” of SMM. A testimonial to Deacon Eric’s observation regarding the “heart” of SMM - Grace became a Trustee of St. Michael’s at the 2022 Vestry meeting on the same day that the parish acknowledged her husband’s appointment as honorary assistant. ✠



The Three Wise Men — Bishop Alex, Deacon Eric and Padi Wilmer.



Ezra, Rose and Padi on their 10th anniversary, along with Eijun and Deacon Eric.