

Diocesan Policy re: Birthdays, Anniversaries, and Special occasion recognition –

On Thursday, February 6th, at Clergy Day, held at Christ Church Cathedral, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee announced a new policy with respect to the acknowledgement of birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions in the life of our congregations. Beginning today, February 9th, 2025, and going forward from this date, it is no longer acceptable in any of our diocesan churches to include such recognition of these events as part of the liturgy celebration. The rationale for this change is simple. Our liturgy service on any given Sunday follows the format as laid down in the Book of Common Prayer, the BAS (the green prayerbook), and other liturgies which have received the approval of our diocesan leaders. As such, when our forebearers laid out the liturgies contained in these prayerbooks, the recognition of such events as birthdays, anniversaries and other special events was not included.

Here at All Saints-by-the-sea, we have a history of acknowledging these milestones in the lives of our congregants each week, as part of our liturgy. One of the concerns expressed at the Clergy Day gathering was this - in our excitement and our desire to celebrate such events in people's lives, we may well be doing a disservice to some who may be dealing with an anniversary of some milestone in their own lives such as a death, a divorce, or any one of many other events which may be

causing distress in their lives. We have not made a habit of recognizing these events. From a pastoral standpoint, we may be failing to be supportive of the needs of these persons.

For these reasons stated, and for others I may not be aware of, beginning this morning, we will dispense with our Community Blessings as part of our liturgy. Because this activity has been, and continues to be an opportunity for us, as a community, to celebrate with our fellow parishioners at their birthdays and anniversaries, the suggestion has been made that we move our “Community Blessings” to our coffee hour gathering after the completion of the liturgy celebration on Sunday mornings. This, we can and will do, with your support.

There may be other ways, we in the near future, can create some form of a record located in the narthex of the church, where anyone could add the name(s) of those wishing to be recognized as having a birthday, or reaching some other milestone in their lives. On a weekly basis, these recorded events could be posted to our service bulletin for that week, or for the week following. Our parish administrator has indicated this is something we can achieve without much difficulty.