

Autobiography
Commander the Venerable Jennifer Gosse-Vingerhoeds

I was born in 1971 to Ed and Bella Gosse of Mount Pearl, NL. As an only child, the Parish of the Ascension was part of my extended family. At age five I was sitting through ACW meetings with my mother and folding serviettes for their fundraising dinners. By age seven I understood that I had a call to ordained ministry. I can only describe it as an innate sense that a priest was who I was created to be.

After high school I did my BA and then decided to take an extra two years to do an MA before seminary. It was during that time that my Dad died, and life as I knew it was shattered. I had experienced death before; all my grandparents had died when I was young. Losing a parent at 21, however, made me question everything, including the faith which had been my anchor in life.

Through that crisis time, I never left the church, it was still my second home, but for a year I went through the motions, angry at God and the seemingly random injustice of life. I can't say what changed in me to bring me out of that darkness, except that God's love never let me go no matter how stubbornly I tried to hide from it, and finally, one day, I was able to feel that love in my life again. I completed my MA and headed straight into the MDiv program.

I was deaconed in August 1997, took responsibility for the Parish of Cartwright, and was priested in January 1998. Four years later, still loving my ministry, I was nevertheless feeling the need for a new challenge. The Bishop offered to move me to the Parish of Lake Melville in September 2001 with the view of becoming Archdeacon of Labrador in January 2002. During that tenure I met and married my first husband, Philip Holwell, in 2004.

After a few years, once again, I began to wonder what was next for me. Military chaplaincy offered a new and exciting challenge and so I recruited in 2007. I've since been posted geographically six times and have served in numerous positions at three ranks and across all three elements.

Death has struck twice more. My Mom died in 2020, and then my husband two years later. The love, mercy and strength of God saw me through that crisis as it has every other one I have faced in life. This time I didn't hide from the grief, but walked through it, one step at a time, supported by family and friends, and upheld by the love of God that never lets us go.

God is good. Two years ago I met a wonderful man, John Vingerhoeds, and we were married on 14 June 2025. His family have opened their hearts and lives to me. I had no children myself, but I now have step-grandchildren who, with smiles on their faces, come running to me for a hug. Life is beautiful, and I look forward to my next challenge.