

Oak Bay United Church Annual Report

July 2019-June 2020



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Minister of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care

*God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,
freedom or prison, you are our home.*

*Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change...*

(More Voices 28, Words: Shirley Erena Murray 1995, Music Tony E Alonso, 2001)

Dear friends in Christ,

Our ways of being church together changed abruptly and radically in the middle of March, with the arrival of the coronavirus in our country and our communities. Yet we discovered, over and over again, that God is faithful and present, no matter what obstacles or restrictions have been imposed.

Over the last few years, we have worked together to discern three priorities in our ministry together: excellence in worship, diversity in community, and a growing children, youth and family ministry.

Excellence in Worship

Worship continued to be the heart of our life together. Regular Sunday morning worship fed us all in preaching, song, prayer, and community sharing, following the theme of “Stories of Faith”. We began fall 2019 with Stories of Hope, followed by Stories of Resistance, and then Stories of the Nativity during Advent and Christmas. Winter 2020 featured a special series on Stories of Faith and Film. We enjoyed 4 services for All Ages that engaged people old and young.

Celebrating the sacraments of our faith continued to be central to our worship life. We remembered the Last Supper in celebrating communion together. We celebrated one infant baptism, and four baptisms of youth (followed by confirmation) and celebrated two more youth confirmations.

We also worshiped together in times of grief, giving thanks for life and seeking God’s comfort in death. We lovingly remember these members and friends of the congregation, who have died in the last church year:

Ron Battersby	Alice Beecham
Florence Brewer	Dorothy Culham
Tom Lane	Bill Magee
Peggy McDonald	Donna Olson
Grace Race	Tsuyoshi Takahashi

Prayer and music in the style of Taize continued to be a beautifully grounding and meditative experience, of candlelight, chant, scripture, silence and prayer.

Our worship life changed radically after March 15, when the coronavirus meant we had to move our worship services online only. Through the tireless efforts of our Music Minister Amy van Wensem (as well as her spouse Casey!), we were able to adapt quite quickly to offer worship live online, via Facebook Live. The service was shorter and included ways for participants to take part in the prayers of the people. All Ages services included ways for participants to respond to the story of our faith as well. We also offered various prayer, worship and devotional times in the evenings via Facebook, either by video or blog post. It was challenging and tiring, but very worthwhile to continue offering ways for the community of faith to worship apart, yet together in the Spirit.

Diversity in Community:

Our commitment to be an Affirming congregation continued, as we marched as a congregation in the city's Pride Parade.

We intentionally planned events and gatherings that would appeal to the whole people of God, including the Blessing of the Backpacks in September, the Christian New Year's Party at the beginning of Advent, and Shrove Tuesday Pancakes and Spiritual Practices to begin Lent. Hosting events that would foster and enhance relationships between and among generations was a priority, such as church movie nights, board games nights, and events like Carols and Cocoa just before Christmas.

Children, Youth and Family Ministry:

Sunday morning children and youth ministry continued to be highly valued, with four age groups being led faithfully and well by lay leaders and staff: 3-4 year olds, 5-8 year olds, 9-11 year olds, and 12+ in youth group.

Families gathered once a month for potluck "FamJam Supper", with time after the meal for parents to explore the spiritual practice of parenting, while children and youth engaged other activities. During Advent, we held two sessions on "Advent for Families", exploring how to faithfully observe and prepare for the coming of the Christ Child with our children.

In the fall of 2019, I was privileged to lead six youth in an 8-session Youth Quest faith exploration program. Each one made their own affirmation of faith in worship and became full members of the congregation.

In the community, we hosted a booth each month (June through September) at the Oak Bay Night Market, engaging market go-ers in making art. We hosted a craft booth at the Oak Bay Light Up in late November, offering the opportunity to make a “popsicle stick” nativity.

Again, with the coming of the coronavirus, this ministry shifted online. We offered a Bedtime Story each evening, Monday through Thursday, via Zoom. A combined Children’s Church was offered after Sunday worship, also via Zoom, and FamJam dinner continued for a few months via Zoom as well.

Looking Ahead:

We may be living in this “new normal” for at least another 12-18 months. I am grateful to our ministry staff for their dedication and faithfulness, and especially their willingness to continue to experiment, learn, change and grow in this “coronatide” of the church.

I am equally grateful for the lay leadership in this congregation. You have been served with great commitment by the Church Board over the last year. Many Board members also serve as the lead of their committee or ministry team. Your church Board does their work with prayer, faithfulness, humour and diligence.

Finally, I am grateful for each one of you, and for the amazing ministry God has entrusted to us in this place. Thank you for your presence, for your prayers, for your phone calls and “drop-ins”, and for your faithfulness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

in Christ,
Rev. Michelle Slater

Minister of Pastoral Care

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you; I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10

The most common command in the Bible is, “Do not fear”, words we need to hear in this time of COVID-19, When fear and anxiety abound. It is such a difficult time for so many reasons, but we are not alone. We have our God; we have our faith and we have our community.

In 2019 we delivered our Christmas Poinsettias and with the help of generous donations from the congregation, delivered Angel gifts to Our Place. We also had the prayer shawl ministry meeting once a month until we had to close the church in March.

Who would ever have thought that the day would come when we couldn’t gather as a community in person, but through the efforts of so many, we have been able to maintain a ministry of care for one another, even if it can’t be in person. A telephone tree has replaced in-person visits. The

Thrift ministry has been able to continue in a modified version. We still have a prayer chain ministry. We are still meeting the needs of our wider community. There is also still the quiet, unnoticed care so many provide to others by having a quiet word, or asking about a known concern, or providing what is needed.

We are truly only a church when we care for each other, and so I would encourage everyone to continue the good work everyone is doing under difficult circumstances, as we live out our calling to be God's hands in the world.

Blessings,
Rev. Susanne

Report of the Board Chair

"in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."
Romans 12:5

2019-2020 was my first year as Chair of your Board.

This year, the Board put in place systems that would allow our communications, finances, and general infrastructure to work well. I am grateful for the Board and staff leadership that worked together to make the changes necessary. We are still a work in progress but are well on the way to predictable, stable patterns of doing things. Our Office Administrator has been vital in suggesting changes and making them work.

At the beginning of each Board meeting, we spend some time learning and growing in leadership knowledge and practice. Rev. Keith Howard offers a unique blend of secular and faith-based ways to look at issues and move forward. This practice centres our meetings and focuses direction, planning, communication, and the necessary motions to approve decisions.

Our in-person meetings moved to Zoom in March with the onset of COVID-19. At that time, we also created, with Board approval, a Response and Recovery team comprised of the Treasurer, Rev. Keith Howard, Betty Thacker, Office Administrator, and the chairs of the Ministry and Personnel Committee and the Board. The weekly meetings allowed us to respond quickly to the Health Ministry and WorkSafe requirements and apply them in our setting.

So many people volunteer for formal and informal roles. It would be difficult to name them all in this limited space. Thank you for stepping up to tasks that make our church stronger.

We are grateful to the Nominations Committee, chaired by Dawn Williamson, for the hours of faithful work to discern a slate for the 2020/2021 Board and Trustees.

We await a response from BC Housing to our request to forgive the mortgage and remove the lien against the property and the church's assets. We are hopeful that this request, made after

several conversations between our lawyer and BC Housing, will be met with a favourable response.

During the past year, we have instituted regular congregational forums after worship, to nurture our sense of community and communication. Thank you for participating in the forums. Your questions and comments help us make better decisions.

This next year we hope to deepen our understanding of our particular work as the church at OBUC and grow as a faith community.

I will close with many expressions of gratitude. Thank you to the Ministry team for all that you do and your work with the Board to form a real leadership team. Thank you to Neil Mossie and Mike McAuley, who are leaving the Board this year. We are better for your involvement and participation. Thank you to the other Board members and our Trustee liaison, who have agreed to continue to serve for another year. And thank you to the new candidates for Board membership who allow their name to stand for this vital work.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Martin
Board Chair

Music Ministry

The music ministry from June 2019-June 2020 has seen many changes; through it all, we have seen the Holy break through, even (and perhaps especially) in those hair-raising moments!

The summer started off with two gatherings at Butchart Gardens where 20-30 people enjoyed outdoor music in community. We also were lucky enough to have Sari Alesh (violin) and Sasha Enns (drums) join our music team for an average of 1-2 Sundays a month. In the Fall, composer/director Brian Tate led a 30-person workshop of powerful movement and songs. In December, the choir (accompanied by Mike McAuley's cheerful reading) delighted 100 audience members with their "Carol and Cocoa" performance.

Bring It On Cabaret saw two great shows under the new leadership of the committee, including Mike McAuley, Pauline Price, Carmen Maclean and Cheryl Thomas. Taizé also continued monthly, supported by the incredible lay leaders: Dustin, Pam and Shannon Demontigny and Casey van Wensem.

On March 12th, the choir had their last in-person rehearsal (already with social distancing, an online feed to Facebook and personal resources to each singer). The choir continued valiantly practicing online through a combined Facebook Live/Zoom platform each Thursday night. We are so grateful for the meaningful conversations (by phone and zoom) and the tear-jerking "I Believe" rendition that they sang as the virtual choir.

We are very grateful to the members of the music team (the Choir members, Casey, Zach, Sharon etc.) who led the way through this innovative time. We also want to especially highlight the work (and sacrifice) of our tech gurus (namely Andie Burrill, Luke Lester, Cathy McAuley, Richard Demontigny, Casey van Wensem, Zach Burrill, Sadie Clark and Jack Dubé). Please, give them a big “thank you” elbow bump when you see them; we couldn’t do this without them.

The Holy presence has never promised that things would be easy but, rather, that we would find meaning and an everlasting love in the midst of it!

Bless you in your journey today,
Amy van Wensem
Music Ministry

Youth Ministry

Until the pandemic, the Youth Group met each Sunday for Youth Church and twice a month on Fridays to share community and activity. Special emphasis was put on intergenerational



connection, service, and participation in worship. Congregation members volunteered their time and hobbies on Friday evenings, including jam making, lawn bowling, and Scrabble. The group provided service to the congregation and community by hosting a community caregiving night for children at Christmas time and a congregation board games night, co-hosting the Shrove Tuesday brunch with the Men’s Club, and volunteering at the Compassionate Resource Warehouse. The group rehearsed under Amy Van Wensem’s leadership before offering Lady Gaga’s “Born this Way” during Sunday Worship. Further

musical offerings and intergenerational events were planned prior to the onset of COVID-19.

During the pandemic, the group continued to meet for Sunday Youth Church and to share community, although all meetings were through Zoom. Rather than meeting twice a month on Friday for 3 hours, the group met every Wednesday evening for 1.5 hours. Ordinary activities were adapted for Zoom, and new opportunities for community building were explored (including Minecraft).

Thanks and blessings,
Zach Burrill
Youth Minister

Leadership and Team Development

Our finances, relationship with neighbours, and staff turnover during the past few years have presented many challenges.

Recognizing the significance of these challenges, the congregation approved a two-year half-time appointment. Work with the church Board and supporting the leadership team shaped the duties.

The two-year investment means to build capacity and practices of leadership. This involves utilizing some of the recent insights and practices developed by the business community including the importance of adopting different leadership models depending upon the situation, understanding the emotional cycle of projects, ways of dealing with stress and building resiliency and models of team work that emphasize trust, conflict, accountability and results.

Much of this work occurs on a one to one basis involving a coaching presence and responding to situations as they arise. Recurring practices contribute to building capacity and keeping lines of communication open. The Board allocates regular time to leadership conversations. The paid ministry staff meet weekly to plan, share concerns, tend wounds and strategize.

When COVID arrived, the intensity and frequency of leadership challenges increased dramatically. And the importance of leadership again bounded to the fore.

Rev. Keith Howard

The Thrift Shop/Annex



The Thrift Shop at Oak Bay United Church has been in continuous operation since September 1982, offering affordable goods to increasing numbers of customers. Our volunteers are a mix of church members and increasingly as they “age out”, members of the wider community who enjoy this opportunity to support our outreach ministry. Revenue continues to increase and partnerships with non-profit organizations such as Our Place, Out of Rain Youth, Compassionate Resource Warehouse, Threshold Housing and Burnside Gorge Housing Outreach, continues.

At least that was our weekly sales activity until March 13 when Covid-19 shut us down. We covered everything with dust cloths and hunkered down waiting to see what the Public Health Office would allow. By mid- May, British Columbia entered Phase 1 of the provincial reopening plan for selected retail businesses. A Thrift Shop Reopening Planning Team was assembled representing all areas of our thrift operation. We presented a 3 phased re-opening proposal to the Church Board and Pacific Mountain Regional Council starting with contactless on-line sales of existing merchandise on Used Victoria. Our first sale, expertly handled by our office manager, occurred on May 26 and continues bringing new customers and considerable revenue.

Phase 2 follows the recommendation of the Public Health Officer – “outside is better” and anticipated having sales on the parking lot during the summer months. The Planning team developed Guidelines for Volunteers, Safety Measures for Customers, and Cleaning procedures following guidelines and protocols mandated by WorkSafe BC., Public Health Officer, and Pacific Mountain Regional Council. How we move existing merchandise from the hall and thrift Shop onto the parking lot, provide shade for volunteers and customers, ensure one- way traffic flow and physical distancing, handle donations and quarantine will require creative problem solving. Parking lot sales are expected to start early in July.

Phase 3 will require permission from our Church Board to re-enter the church buildings in fall, when weather is no longer conducive to outside sales. We do not know what the future will look like, but we will continue to adapt and change as conditions permit, keeping health and safety of thrift volunteers and customers foremost. We have several factors in our favor for continued success:

1. Our loyal customers
2. A supportive Board and Ministry staff
3. Our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who deserve our grateful thanks for all their efforts

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Thacker

Ministry & Personnel Report

The Ministry and Personnel (M & P) Team is a confidential, consultative body for the purpose of providing oversight to Oak Bay United Church’s human resources, including such employment activities as recruitment, hiring, performance management, occupational health and safety, separation, compensation, and other employment standards items.

We are the link between the mission of the congregation and activities of our staff. For the past fiscal year, the committee comprised Stephen Clark, Elizabeth Shumanski, Suzanne Ashwell, Cathy McAuley, and Simon Owen.

The committee has been at work in the following areas this year:

Time and Records Reporting

Oak Bay United Church has a moral and spiritual obligation to be a progressive and fair employer. Benefits accrue to employers that take care of their employees. In the interests of procedural fairness for all employees, and to protect the financial interests of the Church, the committee has established policies and procedures for attendance reporting. We continue to consult with the team to ensure there is transparency and accountability in how time off is determined, calculated, and recorded.

Our employees work very hard for the congregation, and we continue to develop creative ways to provide rest and respite for them that exceeds Employment Standards requirements. The long-term goal is to incorporate these records into a Human Resources Information System (HRIS).

COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety Protocols

Oak Bay United Church has a moral and spiritual obligation to protect all stakeholders from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19 infection, and we have an added regulatory requirement to protect our employees from this risk. The outbreak of the pandemic made it necessary to adopt and enforce a series of protocols to control the COVID-19 hazard. These protocols are adopted from BCCDC guidelines. The team undertook much of this work themselves by collaborating with volunteers and other congregation members to come up with practical solutions that would allow us to move toward digital and in-person Ministry, while safeguarding everyone's health.

Together, the team and M&P discussed the hierarchy of hazard controls needed to reduce the risk of infection, from engineering controls (like restricting access to the chancel), to administrative controls (like imposing 72-hour breaks between different users), to PPE controls (like hand-sterilizing stations). A crucial component to effective OH&S management is ongoing training that emphasizes risk-mitigation. Going forward, we cannot eliminate the hazard of COVID-19, but we can effectively manage the risk and continue to provide our usual, excellent service to our various Ministries.

Restructuring

In response to identifying the structural deficit in the Church's operating finances (thanks to the excellent work of the Treasurer), the Church considered potential ways to remain solvent and sustainable by reducing the largest expense class, which is Human Resources. This involved some difficult decisions that could potentially affect peoples' livelihoods.

Despite well thought-out proposals developed by the Board, the employees developed an even better proposal to manage this expense. The team arrived at a combination of retrenchments in position, wage, and hour reductions for all types of employees. Their proposal, which would have taken effect on September 1st, would preserve all extant positions but one, and would result in a total payroll reduction from 153 to 121 hours per week. This represents an FTE reduction from 3.83 to 3.0.

Owing to a combination of factors (including the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the success of the ProVision grant), the Church was able to delay the proposed job changes until January 1, 2021. The following table represents the changes in terms of hours worked:

ROLE	HOURS PER WEEK	
	Dec 2019	Jan 2021
Lead Minister	40	40
Pastoral Care Minister	15	8
Support Minister	15	8
Office & Communications Coordinator	28	28
Music Minister	20	15
Youth Minister	10	7
Children and Family Coordinator	7	0
Custodian*	15	15

- Custodial services outsourced in July 2020

Liaison and Coaching

M&P supports the Church’s Human Resources through collaboration and access to resources. In the past year, we have worked with the team to address questions of fairness, equity, work-life-balance, mental health, and other issues. We conducted an information session with the Leadership Ministry to collaborate on Employment Standards issues, with a goal of empowering them to engage with all levels of the organization on employment issues. This support will continue in the future.

Special Thanks

A HUGE “THANK YOU” to Cathy McAuley for her strong leadership and stewardship of M&P from 2015 to 2019. Cathy worked tirelessly to establish and develop effective working relationships with all Church employees, as well as our volunteers. Special mentions too, to Jacquie Schaus and Elizabeth Shumanski. Elizabeth took on a strong, leadership role in 2019, and her presence will be missed. Jacquie continues to inspire the rest of us in her strength of conviction and character.

Thanks also to the many volunteers who contributed and supported our staff, congregation, each other, and our community during these dynamic times.

Respectfully submitted,
 Stephen Clark
 On behalf of Ministry and Personnel

Treasurer Report

This was an eventful year for OBUC finances. Shortly after I was appointed Treasurer, an addition error off \$55,000 and the omission of certain payroll expenses of \$20,000, meant that we were starting the year behind the projected budget. During the last year, our givings have

declined; partly as a result of COVID-19, and partly due to the death of some donors, and loss of other donors

On the bright side, there have been efficiencies found for expenses, and the ministry staff brought forward planned reductions for the coming fiscal year 20/21 totaling over \$75,000 which were gratefully and painfully accepted by the Board. Supports from the federal government covered 62% of wages from March to June 2020 and will continue into the new fiscal year until December 2020; these are revenue based and not guaranteed. The Thrift Annex, while sidelined for a few months was able to begin online sales, realizing some revenue again; they should be commended for their ability to pivot and adjust their ministry in these trying times!

I would like to thank the Board and Ministry team for the support in making what have been constant adjustments as we try to move toward a balanced budget.

It should be noted that the Provision Grant of \$30,250 (for the “Rapid Reimagination” Project) arrived at the end of last fiscal year but will be used in this fiscal year, this overstates our Profit & Loss bottom line in both FY2019-2020 and FY2020-2021. Without these unbudgeted “gifts” CEWS & Provision, our FY 2019-2020 ended showing a loss of \$39,000.

Our cash flow remains solid thanks to the CEWS and the Provision Grant. However, we are still in need of long-term viable revenue options in order to run our much-needed ministries.

I anticipate a deficit for the upcoming fiscal year; however, in these new times we can adapt to changes quickly, largely in part to the capacity of the OBUC team and Board.

Respectfully submitted,
Al Dubé
Treasurer

Property Report

We are still holding a number of major building maintenance projects in abeyance because of fiscal constraints. A goal this year is to begin some of those as funding permits. The repointing and front stairs of the Sanctuary are current priorities. In order to establish key control, we have changed the locks to the sanctuary, kitchen and Gardiner Hall.

Over the summer, we are grateful to Brian McLean for painting the lower hall and bathrooms.

Minor building maintenance is ongoing and is done by volunteers where possible. Bob Erickson regularly steps forward to take on minor projects. Brian McLean has been a dedicated support to the maintenance of the church. In addition to painting, Brian is a one-man clean-up crew when the leaves start to fall. Thank you, Brian!

Our contractor James cuts the grass and does yard and parking lot cleanup. The rest of the landscaping and grounds work is done by volunteers. While there are others from time to time,

key volunteers include Dee Burrows, Annette Morrice and Merle Newberg, who are often there a couple times a week tending the gardens.

As outgoing Chair of the Property committee, I would like to offer my thanks for the many volunteers who constantly step forward to do what needs to be done around our church property.

Mike McAuley
Property Chair

The Trustees Report

The Trustees of OBUC have met formally on two occasions during the past fiscal year. As well they have communicated via internet and personal contact regarding specific items of business such as the endorsement of documents to allow the OBUC Property Development to move ahead. Our membership includes: Ken Adsett (Chair), Beverly March (Secretary), Russ Raine (Board Liaison), Lyn Volk, Graham Howard, David King, and Betty O’Coffey. Graham Howard resigned from the Trustees in early 2020, for health reasons. We thank Graham for his service and miss his participation in our group. I wish to nominate Cindy Beaton as Trustee for Oak Bay United Church currently. Rev. Michelle Slater, OBUC Lead Minister, attends most meetings as well.

The Trustee mandate is primarily one of oversight of the Church’s property and resources. To this end, individual Trustees have worked with members of the Church Board and Staff to maintain a watchful eye on: Church Funds, Property and Liability Insurance, Mortgage renewal, and the Physical Properties including Inventory and Property Taxes. In the next year, in addition to these outlined responsibilities, the Trustees will be attentive to the options put forward to the congregation related to property development and exploration of sale. The Trustees, together with the Board, recommended that we not proceed with a second version of development, which would have seen the Pacific Mountain Region given total oversight in the project. As well, we hope to see a plan for deferred maintenance to be addressed, respectful of our fiscal position.

Finally, as outgoing Chairman and resigning Trustee, I would like to thank all Trustees for their time and effort, their willing participation, and their cooperative attitude during my term as Chairman.

Respectfully submitted,
Ken Adsett, Chairman