

# Oak Bay United Church Annual Report

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## July 2020-June 2021



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# Minister of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care

*“What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?... Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31,35,37-39)*

Dear friends in Christ,

I am tempted to add, “neither pandemic, nor worship restrictions” to the list of hardships Paul gives in his letter to the early church in Rome. Indeed, as I write, our province moves into Stage 2 of the “ReStart BC” plan, with more and more restrictions lifting as the COVID-19 cases drop and the vaccination rates rise. What a cause for celebration! It is also a time, though, for care and consideration, as we will each have a different readiness to embrace “normal life” again, and a different comfort level with risk.

Being church together has looked very different, over the last church year, yet we have found the strength, love and grace of God in the midst. We have discovered, over and over again, that nothing really can separate us from the love of God in Jesus. Thank you to each one of you, for the ways you have been part of living and showing that self-giving and compassionate love to each other, to your staff, to the neighbourhood, and to the world.

We have named three priorities in our ministry together: excellence in worship, diversity in community, and a growing children, youth and family ministry. Each has been expressed in as faithful a way as possible, given COVID-19 restrictions on gathering.

## **Excellence in Worship**

Although rarely in-person, worship continued to be the centre of our life together. We livestreamed worship each Sunday from our sanctuary via Facebook Live, and in April, added the ability to simultaneously stream to YouTube.

During July and August 2020, we held a number of family worship gatherings in a congregation member’s backyard. In September 2020, we were allowed to have participants in person to Sunday worship, with a maximum of 50 people (including worship leaders and volunteers), following all COVID protocols, including contact tracing. With the rapid rise in cases in November 2020, we were unable to welcome people in person on Sunday morning, until the end of May 2021. We are thrilled to again welcome a limited number of participants in person, while still welcoming many more online.

One of the gifts of using technology, has been the ability for those in other places to join us for worship (as well as for small group learning opportunities). We also have been able to include



the voices of those who we would not otherwise be able to welcome, which has been a gift. About 8 residents of Carlton House have also been taking part in our worship online, as it is streamed to a meeting room there on Sunday mornings. Our first “off-site worship campus”!

One highlight of our online services has been the “virtual pageants” that members of our children, youth and family ministry provided for us. Both “Do Not Be Afraid: A Virtual Christmas Pageant” and “Good News! A Virtual Easter Pageant”, were delightful and moving interpretations of the stories of Christmas and Easter. Thank you to the families who took part in sharing the story of our faith in such wonderful ways!

We celebrated communion a number of times online, with participants encouraged to provide their own elements and partake together during worship. We also celebrated two baptisms of infants in July 2020, outside in the church garden. It was a blessing to be celebrating new life and a commitment to Christian community, at such a time!

One expression of worship that we have dearly missed is the opportunity to gather for memorial services. Once the worship restrictions are fully lifted, we look forward to gathering together in person to lovingly remember those members and friends of the congregation, who have died in the last church year.

### **Diversity in Community**

Our commitment to be an Affirming congregation continued, although we could not gather for the Pride Parade and Festival in July 2020 as usual because of the pandemic. We look forward to giving this ministry a “jump start” in September. If you feel called to be part of a team that advocates for and celebrates 2SLGBTQ+ people, please speak with Rev. Michelle! (We’ve recently moved 2S, meaning “Two-Spirit” people, to the front of the acronym. Speak with Michelle if you need more info.)

We were able to increase our diversity in an unexpected way because of COVID – geographical diversity! It has been a joy to welcome people to regularly worship with us online, from around Vancouver Island, BC, Canada and even into the US. We recently welcomed two people into church membership who don’t live in Victoria. This kind of diversity will stretch our imagination of how to engage people in faith formation and community, at a distance.

### **Children, Youth and Family Ministry**

This church year, we prepared and dropped off to each participant in our Children, Youth and Family Ministry their own “Sacred Space at Home” kit, including a tealight and candle holder, underlays in the colours of each season of the church year, and a wooden handheld “comfort cross”.

We also relied heavily on the Faith@Home packs provided (at a subsidized cost) by the First

Third Ministry of Pacific Mountain Regional Council of the UCC. Kits were distributed by Rev. Michelle for Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, Lent/Easter/ and Pentecost/Summer. About 30 kits, as well as a supply box for the kits, were distributed to church families. The kits included a Faith@Home magazine filled with prayers and other spiritual practices, theological reflections for families, seasonal crafts and activities, and even recipes! We have also just ordered Camp@Home kits for our church families as well.

### **Spiritual Deepening for Adults**

While not a named priority, members of this faith community are deeply grateful for and take advantage of opportunities for spiritual learning and growth. This past year, Rev. Keith Howard led two online groups, exploring the “Theological Banquet”, a lens that Rev. Dr. Janet Gear has developed that identifies five distinct ways United Church people tend to express their ‘theologies’ (ways of thinking and talking about God). The Board also engaged this model and are applying their learnings to various aspects of our life together.

Rev. Michelle led two study groups online, one during Lent called “Gifts of the Dark Wood”, and one after Easter considering the “Sermon on the Mount” from Matthew’s gospel. Each had a high turnout and participants appreciated the chance to keep growing with and from one another. Some even preferred taking part by Zoom!

Rev. Michelle also led a bible study on the gospel of Luke, at Carlton House via Zoom, for about 8 residents. We look forward to meeting again in person in the fall.

Rev. Dr. Susanne Abbuhl continued to lead the “Read the Bible in 3 Years” group over Zoom, and her deep knowledge, insight and openness were so valued by participants.

A Learning and Accountability group formed on the initiative of Jasmine Robertson has been meeting since summer 2020 over Zoom, focusing on the issue of Christianity and White Supremacy. The group has been learning about the impacts of white supremacy on black, indigenous and people of colour, and the ways Christianity has been implicated in this oppression. Together they have read and discussed *I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown; *Native: Identity, Belonging and Rediscovering God* by Kaitlin B. Curtice; *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* by Thomas King; and *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality* by Bob Joseph. (copies of each of these books are available in the church library). This group facilitated a community memorial installation on the church steps in late May 2021, remembering with sorrow the 215 indigenous children whose unmarked graves were found on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. They are planning a “Blanket Exercise” for the coming year, for the congregation and community.

One learning from this time has been that some people will still want to participate via Zoom, even if others are gathering in person, for various different reasons. We will need to think imaginatively about how to provide “hybrid” learning opportunities, and invest in the necessary technology.

## **Looking Ahead**

It looks like we are finally emerging into whatever the “new normal” will be for us. I am excited (and a bit daunted) at the prospect of a “hybrid” church ministry: both in person, and including and accommodating people online. I will look forward to your patience, support, constructive feedback and grace as we continue to learn and experiment our way into what we will become.

I am also excited about a return to in person Children, Youth and Family ministry! In August, we will host Camp Spirit again, with campers, Leaders in Training and Youth Crew from our congregation and the wider community. I am so looking forward to a return to this summer day camp ministry which has been long-established and valued in this community of faith.

Children’s and Youth Church will begin again in September 2021, and I can’t wait! We are spending the summer cleaning, sanitizing, and setting up the Acorn Nursery again, just beside the chancel (stage area) in the sanctuary, and will be attending to the space, curriculum, and supply needs for the different age groups of our children and youth.

Now that we have experienced staff reductions, we need someone (or a team of two) to coordinate leadership, curriculum and supplies for Sunday morning Children’s Church. Is this a call for you? Please let me know! We will also need a roster of volunteers to be with young ones in the Acorn Nursery on Sunday mornings; again, please consider if this is a call for you. Finally, we are in need of a team to lead our burgeoning “Junior Youth Group” aged children, those aged 11-14 (ish). Please pray and consider if this calls to you!

I am grateful to our ministry staff for their dedication and faithfulness, and especially their willingness to continue to experiment, learn, change and grow over the last 19 months of pandemic life and ministry. I want to thank Rev. Dr. Keith Howard especially, for his support, wisdom, and insight over the last two years. His preaching and worship leadership, small group studies, and encouragement of the growth in leadership capacity of the Board have been a real blessing to me and the whole congregation. Many blessings to you Keith and know your gifts will always be welcome here!

I am equally grateful for the lay leadership in this congregation. And, I am grateful for you, and the ways you have continued to be the body of Christ in the world, online or at a distance Thank you for your prayers, for your phone calls and cards, for your financial offerings, and for the ways you continue to care for one another.

in Christ,  
Rev. Michelle Slater

## **Minister of Pastoral Care**

We were ably served by Rev. Dr. Susanne Abbuhl in this position, until her retirement at the end of December 2020. During that time, Rev. Susanne kept in touch with many of you by telephone

and email, and oversaw the ministry of the “phone tree”. We miss this part of her ministry, but are glad that she continues to lead Bible Study online via Zoom. Susanne’s knowledge and wisdom are very much appreciated!

In December 2020, the Poinsettia Program happened a bit differently, both because of COVID, and because of our dear Meryle Howard’s ill health. Rev. Michelle was blessed to hand deliver poinsettias to members of our faith community who are home bound, as well as those who are grieving a loss in the last year. Largely delivered to doorsteps or care homes, the poinsettias were accompanied by a card and letter with updates about congregational life from Revs Michelle, Keith and Susanne.

Prayer shawls continued to be knitted and dropped off at the church office, and have been shared with great meaning and appreciation to various members of our community of faith. Thank you, knitters, and pray-ers!

In February, we welcomed Rev. Margaret Harper as Minister of Pastoral Care. Margaret continued to provide care over the phone and email and was able to spend some time with the Thrift volunteers, socially distanced. She will leave us on June 30<sup>th</sup> and we are so grateful for her short but meaningful and very much appreciated time with us.

Blessings,  
Rev. Michelle

## **Report of the Board Chair**

*... In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope... 1 Peter 1:3*

This is my second and final year as Board Chair.

The biggest accomplishment that we have made as a Board has been the successful negotiation with BC Housing that has retired the debt from the failed housing project feasibility. It would be an understatement to say that this was more difficult than any of us imagined, taking more time and resources and energy than I thought would be necessary, when I wrote this report last year. The hours of work of our Treasurer, Al Dubé, in providing clear financial information for that negotiation, were instrumental in our success. We can now move forward without a lien on our property and assets, and without the worry of how to manage such crushing debt. Thanks be to God.

We have continued to strengthen our leadership capacity as a Board through learning, led by Rev. Keith Howard at the beginning of our meetings, and through sessions with Rev. Dr. Janet Gear and Allison Rennie. This work sharpens our skills in planning and accountability and is an important foundation for doing the work we are called to do.

We continued our meetings on Zoom and while we missed in person contact, like all of you, our familiarity with working together made this an easier transition.

We had many Covid 19 response plans to review before we could approve safe contact on the church property. Thank you to everyone who diligently monitored and followed Dr Bonnie Henry's directives to create plans for the Board to review as required. And thank you to all of you who have continued to "be Church" during this past year. You met in small groups, (as allowed), we continued pastoral care Ministry, our worship on Sunday was strong and attracted many new people from "away", the Thrift ministry found amazing ways to serve their customers.

As I said in the first year as Board Chair, we have had so many people who volunteer for formal and informal roles that it is hard to name them all, in this space. But thank you for stepping up to tasks that help make our church stronger.

Our ministry team is changing at the end of June. We will miss the leadership of Rev. Dr. Keith Howard and Rev. Margaret Harper. We will be filling the pastoral care position as soon as we are able. We are glad to have Rev. Michelle Slater continuing as lead minister, Amy van Wensem back to the music ministry from her short maternity leave (February through mid-May) and we welcome Zach Burrill back as youth minister in the fall. Casey van Wensem will continue to provide sound engineer support and Sadie Clark and Jack Dubé continue with Sunday support.

We did not have a formal Nominations committee this year but Dawn Williamson and I, with able assistance from Rev Michelle, Beth Bourke and others have tried to address the vacant positions and bring a slate forward at the 2021 AGM for your approval. Thank you to the Board members and Trustees who have agreed to serve another year and to the candidates who came forward to lead this next year.

We thank Russ Raine (Trustee liaison), Emily Jarrett, (Regional Representative), Laurel Bowman (secretary) and Dan Schaus (past Chair) who will be leaving the Board, for their service and contributions this past year. We are grateful to Lyn Volk and Russ Raine for their many years of service as Trustees.

We have established two working groups which will be active over the next few months. First, under the leadership of Bill White, we have a team (Mike Fowles, David King, and Al Dubé) to consider an anticipated offer from Threshold Housing to purchase the building they currently lease. Their report will come to the Board and ultimately to you as a congregation for decision. The second group, with Emily Jarrett leading, is a stewardship committee (Rev Michelle Slater, Al Dubé, and Ian Robertson). Guided by our mission goals and an understanding of the spiritual practice of generosity), they will explore ways to become sustainable as a congregation.

Last year, we were thinking that Romans 12:5 might guide us: "so, in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others". And it has, with a particular Covid twist. But this passage from Romans may carry us another year, as we gather again and are able to explore new ways that "each member can belong to all the others".

It has been a privilege to serve as your Chair this past year. Thank you, Simon Owen, for stepping into the role this coming 21/22 year.

Carol Martin, Board Chair



## **Music Ministry/Online Worship Capacity**

As a music ministry and tech support team, we have seen many changes through this pandemic. To the credit of our community, we have stayed faithful and have even implemented some positive changes which will benefit us for years to come.

As we reported last year, we had moved to virtual choir and Sunday services by March 12th of 2020. We have mostly been entirely online for our ministries though we had a short reprieve of in-person (with masks, distancing and other covid protocols) in the summer of 2020.

For February, March and April, Amy and Casey were away on parental leave (welcoming their new baby, Nathanael "Nate" Van Wensem). During this time, the music ministry had the pleasure of being led by Christine Chepyha whose musical skill and technical expertise was perfect for this role during covid. The tech team was also happy to be led by Sascha Enns, a young and talented tech guy who has previously joined our church as a drummer.

### **New Interactive Live Services**

During this time we worked immensely hard as a tech and music team to get our church on-line in a meaningful way. Rather than pre-recording our services (and pausing choir and other musical endeavours) like many churches, we instead opted for an interactive live services with high-quality live music. Though sometimes exposing our humanity, this allowed us to have meaningful, live prayer times as a community which we felt was vital during a year of isolation. Additionally, this also brought a continued sense of structure to our week as a faith community as people still "gathered" (albeit virtually) online for Sunday mornings at 10am and Thursday night choir practices at 7pm.

### **Technical Advancements**

As a tech department, we have trained (and continually updated) a very capable tech team who support us for each broadcast. We were so grateful to the incredible work of Luke Lester, Sadie Clark, Jack Dubé, Richard Demontigny, Cathy McAuley, Andie Burrill, Zach Burrill, Keith Howard, Charlotte Ley, and Casey Van Wensem. We wouldn't have been able to worship online without their fortitude and perseverance!

As a church, we have now acquired and mastered three video cameras; livestreaming software; two new laptops; a professional camera switcher (using cables donated by Steve Clark); broadcast lighting; a teleprompter style iPad stand; and a YouTube/Facebook live account with many hours worth of material. We have also integrated lyrics and images into the live broadcast using a free work-around designed by Casey, and achieved many other advances that have come from many hours of hard work on the part of our volunteers. We want to especially thank Casey van Wensem who, between July and December 2020, donated an additional 200+ hours of volunteer time researching, creating and running this system for live services/choir practices.

Even after the pandemic, we plan on continuing this stream online so that folks who are unable to attend in person (whether from sickness, schedules, geography or otherwise) can continue to engage authentically in this new worship avenue. We have also had many viewers tuning in from across the province and beyond over this last year, and we would like to continue to offer the opportunity for those in other locations to be an active part of our faith community.

## **Choir Ministry**

Though the choir saw some of the biggest challenges this year in a pandemic spread through droplets, we continued to be a strong and cohesive group and enjoy the life-giving power of music together. The choir met every other week through the Fall (first in a hybrid model with both people singing masks 3m apart and also from home) and again in the Spring virtually on Zoom. We also collaborated together for two virtual choirs (very labour intensive and perhaps not the most musically satisfying of endeavours). The choir practices were full of life as choristers sang our favourite hymns; shared stories; worked on new music and polished our vocal skills. We had three people who were unable to sing because of living in shared spaces but we still saw an average of 26 choristers regularly and faithfully involved in this ministry.

## **The Band**

However, setting up and taking down the technology required for a meaningful music time is a labour-intensive challenge, and an hour-long choir Zoom would require about two + hours of setup and take down to make it happen. We again want to thank Casey as well as Sharon Prindle-Collins for this extra labour of love here as well as the choristers who braved through internet lags, computer issues, and the numerous frustrations that happen online!

During the pandemic, we have also had the pleasure of playing with Zach Burrill, Sharon Prindle-Collins, Andie Burrill and Casey Van Wensem as a small worship band on Sunday mornings. Having the drums, the beautiful vocal harmonies, the accomplished piano stylings and guitar/bass/percussion (a.k.a the one-man-band) allowed our little covid team to fill the space and our congregation's living room with authentic worship music.

## **New, Vibrant Music**

The band has also allowed us to continue our mandate to learn and integrate new and exciting music into our worship time. As a ministry, we believe raising the music of the current saints is a key part of keeping our faith vibrant and living. We also have continued to integrate Heritage hymns into our broadcasts to get us grounded. As a congregation, we have learned music from Sandra McCracken; Brian Tate; Pat Barrett; All Sons and Daughters; and others.

## **Leadership Opportunities**

Our music ministry has received interest and even music leadership opportunities this year to the greater UCC community, namely the Pacific Mountain Region and the Chinook Winds Region. Amy and Casey have also been engaging with music leaders across Canada to help other churches achieve a high level of streamed musical quality (as well as singing safely within covid protocols and research).

## **Learnings**

Our lesson this year has been that online ministry is far more time consuming than it appears. We have found that this year was spent just as busy as the previous years but with perhaps less to show for it. That being said, we are extremely grateful for the continued opportunity to sing, pray and chat together, even if it was harder, during this year of pandemic. Personally, I found the community prayer times on Sunday mornings to be a moment of deep holiness that would shore me up for the following week.

This year, just like any other year, we were called to be Faithful. We have found freedom in hearing and following that musical call.

Amy Van Wensem and the Music Team  
Music Minister and Tech supervisor

## **Youth Ministry**

In preparing to write this report it was odd to realize that the last in-person youth group activities were, for the most part, over a year ago and, therefore, outside of this report. During the summer of 2020 we held some outdoor Sunday youth church and Friday activities, including a beach side book club and flashlight tag, but by the fall youth group transitioned back to a fully online ministry. As part of the Imagine Project, Zach began recording Youth Ministree, a youth ministry video podcast, to continue to share stories and reflections with the youth in a way that fit into their life and the ongoing pandemic realities. The group continued to meet by Zoom, sharing community and games through Zoom up until the beginning of Zach's parental leave at the end of November.

Charlotte transitioned into leading Youth Group in November 2020 and has been hosting bi-weekly zoom meet ups. These consisted of movie nights, game nights, and whatever the youth felt like connecting over at that time. Participation was great from November until late February with an average of 4 youth attending each meeting. Some popular activities included game nights of 'Among Us' and other interactive games such as JackBox. Participation greatly decreased in March 2021 due to, what we believe is, Zoom fatigue amongst the youth and increasing responsibilities outside of church (ex: school, theatre, family etc.). We believe participation will increase once restrictions are loosened and in-person meet ups are allowed as the youth have expressed an impatience to be outside together.

One thing of note is that the youth have been striving for more autonomy in the updates they receive from us. Some youth have signed up for the emails with their own personal accounts rather than relying on their parents to share the meet up details with them. This has proven that they are independently interested in participating in Youth Group but an increase in participation has not yet been noticed.

In the next year we will be thanking Charlotte for her gifts and service to the youth during a difficult time for youth ministry, and Zach looks forward to returning to the role this summer. The year to come offers opportunities to explore anew the role of both youth ministry and youth within our congregation and its family ministries. The fundamental questions of how we best serve our youth, such as whether to have sub-groups for Jr and Sr youth, and what our youth do and can offer our community should be at the forefront of this work. The pandemic has reminded us that change is possible, and not just by necessity. So let us imagine and change for the better as we respond to God's Word, call, and presence in our community.

Zach Burrill & Charlotte Ley  
Youth Ministry

## **The Thrift Shop/Annex**

The Thrift Shop at Oak Bay United Church has been in operation for 39 years offering affordable goods to the community (Sept 2022 will mark our 40th year). Never in all those years have so many changes been required as our capable Planning Committee of Dee Burrows, June Carver, Bryce Fradley, Barry Hill, Pat Kehl, and Don O’Coffey. They responded to the challenges posed by a world stopping pandemic.

Last year’s report included a description of a 3- phase reopening proposal after complete closure in March 2020. Phase 1 was contactless on-line sales on Used Victoria which continues to bring in significant revenue. Phase 2, following the recommendation of Dr. Bonnie Henry that “outside is better”, saw the entire thrift sales, including racks of clothing, being conducted out on the church parking lot starting July 3, in a bazaar like atmosphere. We were able to take advantage of the federal government’s 75% wage subsidy program to hire 3 youth helpers from the congregation, who helped put up tents, move merchandise out and back and provided youthful energy to the undertaking. Following guidelines and protocols mandated by WorkSafe BC, Public Health Officer and Pacific Mountain Regional Council, we had teams of our more vulnerable volunteers working behind the scenes, sorting and preparing merchandise for sale. Phase 3, when our church buildings were reopened in Sept. thrift sales were moved back inside, including use of the Community Hall to ensure distancing and one-way directional traffic flow. Maximum occupancy requirements restricted number of customers permitted in the Thrift Shop clothing section but sales continued.

A system of receiving and quaranting donations was implemented-flood gates were opened as residents who had been following stay home recommendations had been spending time clearing out unwanted items. In the new year when COVID numbers on the island started to spike, the Thrift temporarily closed as our part to reduce community spread. Once more we” pivoted “and trialled “Buy by Appointment” sales in Feb. restricting the numbers of customers and volunteers. This proved to be a popular interim solution, as both customers and volunteers were so happy to be able to come back to the sales. As of this writing, we are preparing to reopen our parking lot sales, weather permitting, in a “hybrid model”, using Gardiner Hall and the Thrift Shop as our main sales areas, still following occupancy guidelines, distancing, masks, sanitizer, traffic flow etc. but continuing to evoke the successful bazaar atmosphere of last summer.

Through all the changes, we have been able to continue to support out community partnerships with pick ups and deliveries made faithfully by Bob Erickson and Sandy Currie to families referred by Burnside Gorge Housing Outreach, and deliveries to our other partners including Our Place, Compassionate Resource Warehouse, Out of Rain Youth Program following their safety guidelines. A request from Our Place/Cool Aid for items for starter kits for clients moving into permanent housing is underway with request to the congregation for items the thrift doesn’t usually have. Storage has proven to be a bit of a challenge, but hopefully the boxes of essential items carefully chosen and packed will soon be in someone’s new home.

The names of our faithful volunteers are too many to list but we value each and everyone of them and we all look forward to the time we can enjoy our coffee conversations once again. That loss of social contact has impacted each of us but we are grateful for the opportunity to continue our



purposeful outreach ministry. We acknowledge with great respect the support we have been so fortunate to have in so many ways from our creative office manager, Devon.

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 Suzanne Ashwell, Stephen Clark, Cathy McAuley, Simon Owen, and Pauline Stephen. The committee has been at work in the following areas this year:

### **Job Design**

As the number of Full-Time Equivalent workers (FTE) has changed to reflect the Church's economic resources, M&P has continued to engage with the team to identify the best practicable deployment of resources. This is a daunting process that challenges the Leadership Team to make hard decisions about which activities represent the highest pay-off. To this end, the Ministry team and Board members participated in a Korn-Ferry exercise with Rev. Allison Rennie to identify the 38 core-competencies needed to move forward. The pandemic has affected the way the Church delivers all its services, including Sunday services. Due to the restrictions around in-person worship, the team had to continuously innovate to provide high-quality, real-time, streaming broadcasts every Sunday. To accomplish this, the Church recognized the need for skills outside of the usual realm for worship services and created a Technical Director position to assist on Sundays. We are grateful to have Casey Van Wensem in this role.

### **Leave Coverage and New Hires**

Babies are a blessing! The team was graced with not one, but two new bundles of joy this fiscal year; Zach and Andie welcomed Mary-Ellen Ruth Burrill, and Casey and Amy welcomed Nathanael David van Wensem. This double good fortune meant the need for additional help to support during the different parental leaves. To handle Zach's youth portfolio in Children and Families, Charlotte Ley was gracious enough to take on a different challenge, as well as lend her help during the Sunday services. For Amy's role, we called on Christine Chepyha to take on the music portfolio, and for Casey's role, we enlisted Sascha Enns. Thanks to those who stepped into the breach!

### **Occupational Health and Safety**

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continued to occupy our team throughout the last fiscal year. M&P continued to observe the guidelines of the Provincial Health Officer and support the team with any concerns. We also experienced the infestation of a few resident squirrel families who have become emboldened by the relative lack of traffic in the church, and who have taken advantage of the peace of the sanctuary to rear another brood among the pews.

### **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. This support will continue in the future.

### **Looking Forward**

To address the structural deficit in the Church's operating finances, the Church continues to explore additional ways to remain solvent and sustainable by managing the largest expense class, which is in Human Resources. As our current number of staff reduces from 4 full-time equivalents to 3 full-time equivalents, it will be crucial for the congregation to support the leadership of the Ministry Team. The role of volunteers will be even more important during this transition period.

### **Special Mentions**

As Oak Bay United Church enters the next fiscal year, we owe our gratitude and recognition to Rev. Susanne Abbuhl, Rev. Margaret Harper, Rev. Keith Howard, and Charlotte Ley. All have contributed to the growth and diversity of our spiritual journey. We are optimistic that we will continue to join with each of them in fellowship in the near future.

Also, a huge "THANK YOU" to Cathy McAuley for her strong leadership and stewardship of M&P from 2015 to 2019 and continuing to serve on the committee until 2021. Cathy worked tirelessly to establish and develop effective working relationships with all Church employees, as well as our volunteers. Thanks also to the many volunteers who contributed and supported our staff, congregation, each other, and our community during these dynamic times.

Stephen Clark, on behalf of the Ministry and Personnel Committee

## **Treasurer Report**

To say that our last fiscal year has been challenging would be a great understatement! On a positive note, after more than 2 years of negotiations we were able to reach a settlement with BC housing and have all Liens removed from our property and contents! This allows us to finally move forward with the strategic financial planning necessary to thrive as a congregation.

We took advantage of government programs to assist in our operations without which we would have had to close our doors. We received \$60,565.87 in wage subsidy and took advantage of a \$40,000 CEBA loan of which \$30,000 needs to be paid back by Dec 2022. We recovered over \$10,000 in GST rebates from past years and saved approx. \$10,000 by doing GST and tax returns in house. Additionally, our wage expense has been reduced by \$90,000 from past levels, achieved with input from staff through lost hours, wage rollbacks and suspended positions.

Givings have been a surprise considering that we have not met in person for a very long time and will end up at approx. \$194,000 for the year, down from our high of \$246,000 in 2017-2018. We will be embarking on a stewardship campaign to help grow these and create a culture of tithing at OBUC, I am committed to educating how making the church part of your estate plans is beneficial for everyone, and how donating financial instruments at the end of a tax year can work in yours and the church's favour.

The process of auditing past years financials has uncovered a structural deficit which needs to be addressed, simply put we spend more than we have coming in and have been for several years. We shall end this fiscal with an approx. \$20,000 loss and are budgeted for a loss of approx. \$10,000 in the upcoming fiscal period.

While we are out of one crisis, we need to move quickly and decisively to avoid another. We need sustainable revenue sources that will help us eliminate our structural deficit, fund the goals of the congregation, address much needed deferred maintenance, and help plan long term. If nothing changes our current cash flow allows OBUC to be operational for 18-24 months.

Al Dubé, Treasurer

## **Property Report**

As the new Chair of the Property committee, I would like to thank Mike McAuley for many years of service in this role. As expected it has taken me a long time to learn the ropes and Mike has provided much needed assistance and guidance during the transition. I would also like to thank Brian McLean for all of the work he has done over the past year to keep the property in good shape and responding to urgent requests. It would be challenging to list all of the things Brian does on a regular basis but it includes maintenance of Threshold House, cleaning gutters, painting, electrical repairs and catching squirrels (no joke).

No major projects were undertaken this year due to financial constraints. We will need to continue to be selective about the projects we undertake this coming year to maintain our fiscal responsibility but completing the repointing of the brick building and fixing the front stairs will likely be priorities. We have had some challenges with squirrels and other rodents entering the building and causing quite a bit of havoc. As a result, we are working on a comprehensive plan to prevent them from getting into the building by identifying and sealing off potential entry points.

We have a contractor to cut the grass and do yard and parking lot clean-up but the gardening and landscaping is done by volunteers. I would like to thank all of the people who have volunteered their time over the past year to help maintain the church property. Your efforts help us reduce the cost of external contractors and keep the property looking well cared for.

Dustin Demontigny, Property Chair

## **Trustees Report**

In the past year Cindy Beaton, David King, Bev March, Betty O’Coffey, Russ Raine, and Lyn Volk have served as the Trustees of Oak Bay United Church. Rev. Michelle Slater is also a Trustee by virtue of being our Minister.

The role of the Trustees is to represent the interests of both the United Church of Canada and the congregants of Oak Bay United Church, as members of the United Church of Canada, in maintaining the integrity and value of the property. This entails oversight of property (property insurance, property taxes, inventory, indebtedness, etc.), and risk management (liability insurance, etc.)

One Trustee serves as liaison between the Trustees and the Board.

The Trustees have held one meeting in the past year, on May 5th, and at this meeting the Trustees approved the Settlement Agreement between B.C. Housing and the congregation. The documents have subsequently been registered with the Land Titles Office and the mortgage and liens have been discharged.

Lyn Volk is retiring as a Trustee and, on behalf of the congregation I would like to express great appreciation for her service, which has been long-term, dedicated, diligent, and faithful.

At the May 5th meeting I was elected Chair of the Trustees and I am prepared to continue as a Trustee for another year, as are Cindy Beaton, Bev March, and Betty O’Coffey. In the event we are re-elected we will welcome any new Trustee elected by the congregation.

The United Church of Canada has completed a significant revision of the Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook, and the Trustees will meet sometime in the next quarter for an orientation to the role and to familiarize ourselves with the revised Handbook.

David King, Chair

## Membership Report

In the last year, the following changes were made to the church membership:

Total membership June 30, 2020:		227
New members:	by transfer	4
	by affirmation of faith	6
Members removed:	because of death	6
	because of transfer	0
Total membership June 20, 2021:		231
Infant baptisms:		2
Weddings: (under COVID protocol)		2



## **In Loving Memory**

Marie Conrad  
Linda Edwards  
Graham Howard  
Gordon Lough  
Jill McNaught  
Doris Purdy  
Jean Reid  
John Tickner