

Oak Bay United Church Annual Report

July 2022-June 2023



A Fierce Agent of Hope



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Message from the Chair of the Board

Jeremiah 29:11 ~ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope

Thank you OBUC leaders and congregants for all your work, wisdom, and support over the past year. Not the easiest of years and yet here we are poised to solidify our fiscal position, choose a new Minister, work together on the actions that will show how we are and can be Fierce Agents of Hope.

The work of volunteers is so important and really makes us who we are... The Thrift Shop, the Choir, the STARS group, church school, our online bible Study group with Rev Susanne Abbuhl, hospitality including soup and soul to name but a few. 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 could not do this work without your leadership.



It has been a privilege to work with the Board and with Rev Dr Keith Howard (in his dual role leading discernment and as minister) in leading on your behalf. We have tried to engage more intentionally with the congregation as we have defined our purpose and our goals. Feedback suggests people like to be engaged in that work at our monthly soup and soul meetings (and enjoy the fellowship of breaking bread together). Grateful for the additional support of volunteers to make these gatherings possible.

Since the fall, the Board reinstated 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 not done yet. Thank you to Keith Howard and Gaye Sharpe for providing staff leadership, to Jenna Spowart for organizing and creating welcoming space for the library, to Andie Burrill for her enthusiasm and ideas for volunteer engagement and decluttering and to Alana Hayes who has quickly learned the work of office administration and been adaptable and cheerful in the face of endless changes and challenges.

As has been our practice for some time, at the beginning of each Board meeting, we spend time learning and growing in leadership. Our focus these past few months has been in discerning the congregational soul, following the work of Susan Beaumont, and led by Rev. Keith Howard.

Broadening and expanding our understanding and practice of discernment has, in turn, meant a new way of considering decisions. Thank you to all for engaging in this work and trying new ways of doing things.

This work of discernment is now part of how we do things. The decision to sell the THS property, the Thrift futures work, and Nominations as well as our work on purpose have all followed this intentional path.

We will begin the process of looking at Board structure in early July with the hope that the Board and congregation can consider a revised structure in the fall.

The search team has been named and there will be a meeting in the fall to approve the Church profile and then periodic updates until the meeting to call a minister. The search team will decide dates and plan that process.

We are in the final stages of approval of the contract with Threshold Housing Society to sell them that property. The regional church has to approve the contract, after the Trustees review and provide a certificate to the approvals committee. Al Dubé and Simon Owen are currently working with our legal counsel to ensure details are correct. Once the contract is approved there are still the conditions that must be met to rezone. The rezoning requires municipal approval.

With gratitude,
Carol Martin
Board Chair (June 2023)

Report of the Clergy (halftime, locum)

The congregation exhibits a significant amount of energy and willingness to engage in the next chapter in the mission of the congregation. The leadership challenges for staff and our Board are encouraging creative energy while retaining accountability for our overall purpose and direction. I shall leave it to our Board to report on their impressions of the overall health and direction of the congregation. The work of our congregation involves much more than that of paid staff, and the extent of that involvement indicates our well-being.

I began on February 6, 2023, with a mandate to work until June 30, 2023.

The initial purpose of the locum was to contribute to developing a stable context in which the Board and congregation could make strategic, high-leverage decisions that would result in a practical, joyful and sustainable ministry. Several strategies accompanied the purpose (see below).

However, it became apparent that to achieve that purpose, clarity about congregational purpose/mission was essential. As the great philosopher Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else." With the assistance of a ProVision Grant, Discerning Our Soul, the congregation accepted the call to be a Fierce Agent of Hope.

Despair, isolation, uncertainty and anxiety grow in the economic, political, and spiritual dimensions of our life. Symptoms fill the news - epidemics of loneliness, suicide, family stress, drug usage, career uncertainty and anxiety. Generations fear for their future and the future of the planet. Against this societal backdrop, our Board focused on two strategies to live out this call: pursuing challenging, interdisciplinary, relevant, joy-filled, passionate and thought-provoking worship in the sanctuary and online; and healthy, reciprocal relationships under the banners of hospitality and intergenerational engagement.

Recovery from the impact of the pandemic and the need for a reorientation of much of our infrastructure means that the focus of this locum has moved from routine maintenance to reorganization and revitalization. Pulling on almost any thread of the congregational tapestry reveals another series of decisions and tasks to be considered if not engaged.

As a congregation, we are not where we need to be regarding clarity of role, purpose, strategy and organization, yet we have moved significantly.

The following list details some of the initial strategies accompanying my appointment. What follows is a brief report on four overarching strategies.

Strategies

- In cooperation with the Board chair, develop processes to engage the Board in decision-making about significant issues.
- To provide spiritual and tactical support at monthly Board meetings.
- To contribute to the conversations that describe optimal staffing arrangements for ministry during the next chapter of the congregation's life.
- To participate in and support conversations about the wisdom of the property sale held by Oak Bay United.
- To develop an effective and mutually supportive staff team.
- To preach at two worship services a month (one under the banner of the *Discovering the Soul* project and one for this project)
- To promote experimentation in ministry, mainly related to the intergenerational aspects of Sunday worship and the development of the congregation's online presence.
- To encourage more involvement by lay people in areas of ministry such as hospitality and liturgical leadership.

*“Making a plan without the right tools is like making spaghetti without a pot.”
(Kris Hughes)*

Along with work on the higher-level goals, some internal work was required.

Stability + Team Development

A sense of stability allows the congregation to take stock of its present condition and formulate a plan. This work proceeds with the congregation's and our Board's affirmations concerning the draft statement of purpose - Fierce Agent of Hope - and two significant results, Worship and Reconciliation (emphasizing hospitality and intergenerational connection).

Hiring **Andie Burrill** as Logistics Coordinator facilitates determining purpose “from the other end,” as she thoroughly reviews all the “stuff” the congregation has hidden away, asking about its nature, purpose and place in the next chapter of our life. Adding **Alana Hayes** as Office Administrator consolidates the administrative work and holds significant promise for greater efficiency. Her skills and demeanour have made the transition more painless than anticipated and signal greater possibilities. **Anna Bigland-Pritchard**, Music Director, has brought musical leadership and supervisory skills to her role, reinforcing our commitment to excellence and a culture of mutuality, respect and transparency. **Gaye Sharpe** brings tremendous experience, creativity and passion to work with children, youth and families. (see that report). Adding the **Rev. David Drake** as Volunteer Associate Minister provides a much-needed dimension.

The staff team is beginning to gel and provides concrete data for developing a future staffing configuration. Our Board chair, Treasurer and M&P chair have been patient and helpful in sorting responsibilities and possibilities.

Intergenerational Work and Ministry with Children, Youth and Families

The initial intention of having more intergenerational participation in our worship services continues. We have not yet found a reliable system to identify and rely upon volunteers for worship leadership. However, the more profound work of formulating an authentic, viable and effective ministry to these critical segments of our congregation has just begun. (See the Report on Ministry with Children, Youth and Families.)

Preaching & Worship

I have preached on more occasions than initially estimated. The liturgical leadership presence was necessary. We have sought to bring additional elements into our worship toolbox by sharing worship events like Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Moderator's visit with Fairfield United and encouraging leadership from within the congregation. This variety is necessary and appreciated.

Technical Excellence

In the short term, Alana, our Administrator, has led the effort to locate problems with our Internet capacity. With the support of the Treasurer, Dave Gillespie and the Facilities team, that issue was resolved. We are working towards technical excellence during worship by providing more specific

training on our sound and light equipment. This work will continue with a performance review scheduled for August 2023.

The vision for the sanctuary is to turn it into a top-notch, if not state-of-the-art, medium-sized performance space for the performing arts. Our major obstacle is that our audio and visual equipment needs a significant upgrade. We are pursuing the availability of grants that would assist in attaining this goal.

“Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.” - Pablo Picasso

Developing a concrete plan with strategic initiatives and actions is the work of the next few months.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dr. Keith Howard

Music Ministry Report

Music Ministry at Oak Bay serves a choral ministry, as well as planning and leading music for weekly and special services at the church. My goal is to empower the congregational voice and to facilitate collective creativity.

The Music ministry at Oak Bay United has been growing gently and steadily since I was hired as the permanent Music Director in October. The choir has been leading worship weekly, and has welcomed new members and new music. With a focus on mindfulness, community, and joy, the choir has been building up their collective voice for the past 7 months. We met weekly from September onwards, with a break in January.

The choir has shared special pieces for special services: Christmas, Easter, and Earth Sunday. Focus has also been given to solo and small-group performance opportunities to members of the congregation and choir, and has also brought in several guest musicians to further enhance weekly gatherings.

I wrote three liturgies: for solstice, Earth Sunday, and pride. We have collaborated with Fairfield United to much musical success but some administrative and logistical frustration.

OBUC has also become a musical home for a small community of queer people who do not attend services! My music studio, ABP Music, hosts singing students at Oak Bay United, including a group class called “The Courageous Voices Collective.” This is a small-group singing class for queer and allied women and non-binary folks who want to build their courage as singers, and take time for creative self-care. It has brought historically marginalized folks into the church building who haven’t been here before. A few are even interested in joining the choir to continue growing as musicians and build community!

Looking forward, I'm planning special music to celebrate all through the month of June, which is Pride Month. I'm also making connections with live music and arts industry folks in Victoria and hoping to bring more live performances to both our sanctuary, and our garden space by way of concerts for the wider community.

Tech Director

Cecilia Davies, our tech director, has been learning and growing a great deal. This will be augmented by a series of training sessions with Lumera productions in May. Cecilia, Andie, Keith, and I will attend these lighting and sound training sessions, and a checklist of problems to address have been prepared! We're looking forward to a more stream-lined, professional, and creative production quality on Sundays thanks to the hard work of Cecilia and her Sunday Support Team!

I inherited a disorganized office/tech room, and have spent substantial time with Cecilia, Sadie, Elias, and Delia organizing the books, scores, papers, tech, instruments, and other surprise items! We intend to finish this project by mid-June. This will make the lives of the Sunday Support Team and Tech Director much easier, will create a space to meet and create music, and will also ensure that whoever inherits this space in the (distant) future is set up for success on their first day at the job.

Prepared by Anna Bigland-Pritchard

Annual Report for Children, Youth and Families

This report covers the period from February to June, 2023- the time in which I assumed lead responsibility for Ministry with Children, Families and Youth.

The goals established for this 5-month ministry were:

1. To support, encourage and supervise the staff who have responsibility for children and youth ministry;
2. To provide support and evaluation of the program for the youth and children's ministry;
3. To encourage and support greater lay leadership in the areas of children and youth ministry;
4. To encourage the leadership and participation of children and youth in worship
5. To establish a group of lay leaders who can help strategize about quality Christian education for children;
6. To assist in creating engaging multigenerational worship (i.e. the front end of the worship service and intergenerational services like Easter).

Each of these goals has been addressed with varying degrees of success.

Initial contact with the lay Christian education leaders (from a list received from the previous minister) disclosed very little willingness to continue or to assume additional volunteer work in this area. A meeting with Godly Play leaders revealed a belief in the program plus a desire to provide more variety for the children. However, we have few volunteers for the Godly Play program and no volunteers for other age groups. With no programs for some age groups, limited leadership and the decline in children's numbers that happened and continues to happen since COVID, we have seen a steady decline in the participation of children and families in our church school and worship.

A community dinner was held to initiate conversation about these challenges. This conversation continued through other community events during May and June.

Annalise, our youth minister, resigned May 15th, 2023. One of the main reasons she cited for this decision was that very few or no youth participated in either the Friday night Youth Group or on Sunday mornings. Zoom conversations took place with youth and their principle caregivers to help discern the direction for further ministry with youth. (See Observations Report).

The Tuesday morning preschool drop-in continued under the able volunteer leadership of Andie Burrill with significant support from Jenna Spowart. Though the numbers are small, parents/caregivers voice that it is positive for their children and provides personal support. Since Andie has taken on other leadership roles within the congregation, leadership for this program is in question and requires further evaluation.

We have worked to make the front end of the service more visually engaging and participatory for children and youth. It is important that the voices of children and youth be heard by the wider community. Intergenerational services were held on Easter and Pentecost Sundays. Response to the children's participation in those services has been generally positive.

A small group of lay leaders, with expertise in theology and early childhood education, has been formed. Their goal is to examine current programming and suggest possible directions for the future. A report is included in this annual report as well as my own observations about what is working and not working.

Though I am concerned about the current state of the children, family and youth ministry, I remain hopeful. I believe, as we engage the real-life circumstances of families, we can create a ministry that inspires, challenges and is faithful to our calling as disciples of Jesus.

Yours in Christ,
Gaye Sharpe

Observations & Hopes for Children & Family Ministry

Firstly, thank you so much for the opportunity of working with the community of Oak Bay United and serving the children of our community. It has brought me great joy to be with them and to, yet again, tell the stories of our faith.

Through conversations with children, families, youth, through meetings with a committee focusing on the future of this ministry and through three congregational non-Sunday gatherings, some observations may be helpful as the congregation moves into its future.

A draft mission statement, formed by a committee working on the future direction of children and family ministry reads:

To support the sense of wonder and joy that children demonstrate in their spiritual journey, we seek to offer interesting and engaging experiences for children and their families that honour the child and nurture the curious and questioning mind of the child. Programming will provide a safe and welcoming environment in which children and their families engage with the stories and traditions of our Christian faith through active play and child-directed experiences.

This mission statement was drafted by considering the realities of our congregation, life circumstances of Generation Z and current early childhood educational practices. Recommendations regarding staffing and program issue from this statement.

Children

The children, that are most engaged at Oak Bay, are between the ages of 2-9. These children, who come most Sundays and who have become a lovely core to a Children's Church, form the perfect center from which to build. Because, at the moment, older children are not attending, it is felt that focussing and putting resources with who is attending makes good sense. The program will build as the needs of our current children are met.

The committee felt that a staff person who provides a continuity of caring presence, skilled at providing excellent programming and who works encouragingly with volunteers would serve the ministry well. The theological content piece can be learned and supported but we need a charismatic, energetic, excellent teacher with some religious experience and a curiosity about faith development in children.

Ministry with children cannot be simply Sunday focussed.



Family Ministry

Many families feel connected to Oak Bay United Church. They are unable, for a number of reasons, to attend on Sunday morning. Many, however, are eager to attend family/community centered activities. These activities can take many forms.

Through conversation we discovered that most families appreciate a meal and some sort of faith programming at least once a month. A week day would be preferred. This would give a night off of cooking, a chance to connect meaningfully with others and to worship and practice faith through prayer, singing and conversation. These gatherings are, I feel, essential to rebuilding our family ministry. There are volunteers who are willing to support this through cooking and planning.

Other activities that are fun, justice-oriented, greater community-focussed also interest our families.

Communicating with families is challenging. They are often too busy to be reading long e-mails or congregational newsletters (TL:DR - too long: didn't read). Other forms of connection, interaction and communication are important to consider.

Youth

Youth want to be connected with each other and the church. Sunday morning and weekends do not work with lives that are busy and, often, sport or activity centered. They are interested in gatherings that engage the world, involve a variety of youth and support them individually as they navigate a complex world with complex issues. Working more cooperatively with other congregations to offer a vibrant youth ministry may be a worthwhile investigation.



Leaders

We have many gifted leaders within the community of Oak Bay who have a passion for children and youth. Often their time is limited or they need some sort of paid employment to enable them to offer their gifts. There is little capacity in their lives to volunteer. The congregation may have to consider a different model of supporting Children's Church and youth than the traditional volunteer model.

Yours in Christ,
Gaye Sharpe

Report of the Treasurer

It always seems that we have financial challenges every year at OBUC. The difference this past year was that we had prepared and planned for most of them. Overall, we should arrive very close to budgeted projections for Revenue and Expenses, thanks in part to our financial systems in place.

Some highlights

- Givings of \$20,850 towards cost of a heat pump which makes us a much more energy efficient congregation and should save us money in consumables. It should be noted that all giving's directed to the Heat pump were used towards the purchase of and making the space more energy efficient.
- Givings of \$15,367 to M&S
- Replace roof at Threshold house.
- We were slightly below budget in Giving's anticipating 95% of budgeted projections.
- Wages slightly above budget due to employee turnover
- The Thrift ministry continues to be a strong contributor to the community.
- We saved money with a new UCC insurance contract saving us \$7000.

As we look to the upcoming fiscal year, I will be tabling a budget slightly above last year's, with Revenues and Expenses hovering around the \$491,000 range. We must consider expenses related to our potential new minister, approx. \$30,000 for relocation etc. As we are still in the process of selling Threshold House, I am using my crystal ball to estimate what that may look like in the budget.

Once the sale finalizes and closes, I will likely approach the congregation with an amended budget reflecting the sale. I am anticipating that the lost rental revenue will be offset by the lack of mortgage payment and investment income realized from part of the proceeds of the sale.

Our overall plan hasn't really changed for the proceeds of the sale,

- Agreed purchase price \$1,689,000.
- Expenses related to the sale Approx \$40,000
- Pay Island savings mortgage \$ 245,000.
- Upgrade technology in sanctuary space in order to gain rental income \$50,000.
- Repointing of Bricks \$100,000
- \$300,000 to bring bank account up to a level that shows stability.
- \$1,000,000 to be invested in stable protected financial vehicles returning a minimum of 6%

Of note proceeds from the sale are not to be used for operational expenses.

The overall financial health is trending in the right direction, the balancing act is challenging, but I feel we have systems in place to help OBUC achieve long term financial stability.

Respectfully submitted,

Al Dubé
Treasurer

Report of the Trustees

The Trustees are elected by the members of the congregation, but they are, in fact, the agents of the United Church of Canada (the national body), and their role is not typical of trustees.

The Trustees are on title, with the Land Titles Office, as the owners of the property of Oak Bay United Church, on behalf of the United Church of Canada.

The role of the Trustees is to protect the interests of the national church by:

- providing certain information to the national church;
- ensuring that property is adequately insured; and,
- ensuring that trust conditions are adhered to when bequests are made to the congregation.

The Trustees have no role to play in reviewing or modifying any decisions made by the Board of the congregation.

In compliance with this role, in the past year the Trustees have forwarded a request from the Board, to the Pacific Mountain Region of the United Church of Canada, for approval in principle to sell St. Columba House and the land on which it sits to Threshold Housing Society. Pacific Mountain Region has approved this sale, in principle. The final details of any sale will also have to be forwarded by the Trustees to Pacific Mountain Region, which retains the right to approve (or not) the sale when the details are known.

We consider the property to be adequately insured, but we do recommend that the insurance coverage should be reviewed in the year ahead.

My term of office is completed at this congregational meeting, and I am retiring from the Trustees. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve my church: it has been a learning experience.

My fellow Trustees have been Stephen Ashwell, Cindy Beaton, Zachary Burrill, and Betty O’Coffey. I express my thanks for their contribution to the work of the Trustees.

David King, Chair of the Trustees

2023 Property Report

The people of Oak Bay United Church are what make it the wonderful congregation that it is. Having a beautiful and well-maintained building for us to gather and worship certainly helps. Many thanks to Brian McLean for his steadfast commitment to maintaining our red brick church and the surrounding property. He looks after all things large and small to make sure that the property and all the buildings are in good working order.

There were many projects undertaken over the past year to improve our facilities and systems. The roof of Threshold House (St. Columba) was replaced last summer. This was a much-needed repair and Brian did great work to find a contractor that would do a high-quality job for a reasonable price.

The audio/video system in the sanctuary was upgraded in the fall to improve our streaming capabilities. The addition of a central pan tilt zoom (PTZ) camera that could be controlled remotely was a big improvement to the quality of our live streamed service. This allowed us to remove the wires, cables and cameras from the floor and provided the technical team with better and more reliable equipment.

The oil furnace used to heat Gardiner Hall was replaced in the winter with an electric air source heat pump. This upgrade eliminated the largest source of fossil fuel emissions from our property. A fundraising drive provided most of the funding needed to pay for this improvement including upgrading the fans in Gardner Hall. Thanks to all of you who donated to this cause.

The sale of St. Columba House to Threshold Housing Society is in progress and expected to take a few more months to complete. There will be more work to do this year to maintain our property and facilities. The board will continue to prioritize critical maintenance and upgrades to maintain the property and manage our operating budget.

Many thanks to Brian McLean and anybody else who has volunteered their time over the past year to help maintain our church property. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. It helps reduce the cost of hiring external contractors and keeps the property in good working condition.

Respectfully submitted,

Dustin Demontigny, Property Chair

Ministry & Personnel Report

The Ministry and Personnel (M & P) Committee 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, Laurie Hurlburt, and Daniel McCarthy.

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

Renewal and Recruitment

With the departure of Rev. Michelle Slater and Devon Tillie-Brownsey, M&P has been diligently working to recruit and retain the talent needed to move our Community of Faith forward. We are fortunate to have had the leadership of Rev. Keith Howard, Gaye Sharpe, and Anna Bigland-Pritchard in their respective ministries. We have also had the good fortune of securing the services of Alana Hayes in the Office Manager and Communications Coordinator role.

Alignment with Employment Standards

As the labour market continues to present new challenges for employers, M&P has been taking steps to ensure Oak Bay United Church remains an attractive place to work for prospective employees.

Critical to our success is ensuring procedural justice in the way we treat our people. A recent survey of 1,800 Canadian employees found that, of the five top reasons that people quit, the three major causes were issues around unfair pay practices, lack of transparency, and trust issues with senior leaders.

It is our goal to ensure openness and transparency in all our employment practices to engender mutual trust. To this end, we work to meet or exceed all aspects of the BC Employment Standards Act.

Occupational Health and Safety

With the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee's focus has shifted to support the team's mental wellness. We also continue to look for ways to provide for our employees' personal security needs, ensuring mitigation of both physical and psychological risks, wherever possible. We also continue to monitor the quality of the work environment for opportunities for improvement and better work outcomes.

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

As our search committee begins the important work of finding our next Lead Minister, M&P will endeavour to foster a culture of acceptance and inclusiveness so that our next pastoral charge aligns with the strategic direction of the Community of Faith.

Expression of Gratitude

As Oak Bay United Church enters the next fiscal year, we owe recognition and gratitude to all those who supported us in the past twelve months, including both those who will continue into the future with us, and those who will not. 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.

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

STARS – Seeking Truth, Anti-Racism and Reconciliation

September was a very busy month for STARS. We participated in the OBUC Open House and hosted in person and virtual discussions of the book *Five Little Indians* by Michelle Good. As a founding member of the ReconciliACTION Oak Bay Network we also took part in the Kairos Blanket Exercise and an All-Candidates Meeting on Truth and Reconciliation. A group of us also went on a very informative Explore Songhees tour led by Cecelia Dick. On September 25, Rev. Julienne Kasmer led worship and Shirley Jones from Our Place led a reconciliation-themed worship service. On Sept. 30, we took part in the Oak Bay National Truth and Reconciliation Day event at Sno'uyuth as well as the South Island Powwow hosted by the Songhees First Nation.

In November, we had a discussion of the book *From the Ashes* by Jesse Thistle, and over several months in the spring we read *To Share Not Surrender: Indigenous and Settler Visions of Treaty-making in the Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia* by Peter Cook et. al. On April 22, we hosted an all-ages event featuring Robert Lucky Budd telling the story of *Cloudwalker*, illustrated by Roy Henry Vickers. We partnered with Fairfield United Church, who took the lead in



helping us all paint beautiful banners for display in the sanctuary for the Earth Day service. In May, we honoured Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People by distributing Red Dress Day pins and Moosehide Campaign pins, and again partnered with Fairfield United for the Moosehide Day Walk to End Violence Toward Women and Children on May 11.

Prepared by Felicite Stairs

The Thrift Shop/Annex

As we come close to the end of our 40th year as a dynamic Outreach Ministry of Oak Bay United Church, we reflect on the accomplishments and all the volunteers past and present, with humility, and much joy. A wonderful celebration was held on Aug. 19, 2022, in the Community Hall, with food, speeches, door prizes, and lots of stories shared. We remember with gratitude the contribution of the 26 volunteers whose names were listed, as well as the more recent deaths of Lois Johnson, who looked after the "good" silver; and Claudia Montgomery and Areline Grbavec, who succeeded Priscilla in our toy area.

As a number of volunteers have remarked, they could all "write a book" about strange and unusual items found among the boxes of donations received and sorted weekly, or the stories and comments made by our loyal customers, who weathered the Covid-19 pandemic hoping for a return to "normal". Through it all, the volunteers have carried on "calmly, safely and with kindness", continuing to offer affordable goods to increasing numbers of customers, and providing practical support to many refugee families, and others in need in our local and global community.



This past year, we were able to assist families from Afghanistan, Palestine, Sudan and many more fleeing the war in Ukraine. When fire devastated a local residence and caused the Mustard Seed to close, we were able to provide essential items as requested. Burnside Gorge Housing Outreach has referred families to us for furniture and household items and we always add toys and books for the children. Another partner who does work on the global scene is the Compassionate Resource Warehouse. They have packed and sent a number of very full

container loads to Poland to be sent on into Ukraine -one fascinating video shows the transformation of a container into a fully operational surgical clinic, complete with X-ray equipment. Another to Malawi where an industrial school was being built to train young leaders in sustainable agriculture-just as the catastrophic effects of Cyclone Freddie were being felt. We have told some of their stories in the Weekly Announcement sheets as a way of letting the congregation know more of the work of the Thrift and how we view our outreach ministry.

In 2022, the Board requested a Futures Development Task Group be formed “to articulate the mission and ministry goals of the Thrift to increase the congregations’ familiarity with and investment in these goals”. They recently endorsed the following Mission Statement: “With optimism and joy, helping our local and global community flourish.” As a result of the eight meetings held to date, progress has been made on several fronts. Drop in coffee and conversation has been restarted once a month



for customers who really missed the socialization during covid restrictions. The task group provides monthly updates to the Board and provides the congregation with stories about the people assisted. A colorful flyer will soon be produced with photos of the volunteers at their work as a way of encouraging more volunteers to join this ministry. Once again, we thank all our supporters, volunteers, donors etc. who keep this vital outreach ministry thriving.

Betty Thacker

OBUC Annual Membership Report 2023

There are currently 232 members on our membership roll, and many more faithful adherents. According to the roll, we added 1 person through baptism, 4 people through confirmation, 4 through reaffirmation of faith, and 3 through transferring from another congregation. We removed 4 people who died between July 1, 2022 and the date of this report. There were no marriages recorded.

Respectfully submitted,

Felicite Stairs, Board Secretary
May 30, 2023

In Loving Memory

Jean Cathro
Emma Gabor
Jean Galbraith
Arelina Grbavec
Chrystine Green
Lois Johnson
Mary Lane
Claudia Montgomery
Scott Owens
Gwen Smart
Del Volk