

July 2017 – June 2018
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Minister of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care

Submitted by the Rev. Michelle Slater

*“Behold, behold! I make all things new,
beginning with you, and starting from today.*

*Behold, behold! I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.” (More Voices #115)*

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

One of the great gifts, and challenges, of the gospel is Christ’s “making all things new.” Sometimes, we would rather cling to the familiar and comfortable, even if the way things are is not ideal, or life-giving. Change can be difficult, or painful. Yet God in Christ continues to call us to new life, new hope, new expressions of the faith.

I can see evidence of that newness of life in our midst over the past year of ministry together. New groups have sprung up in answer to ministry opportunities, such as the ...

New ministries are being pursued, like the Pastoral Visiting Team, the Healing Pathway Ministry, Family Yoga, Supper Choir, and the FamJam Family Supper. New members are being welcomed, and more and more people are taking the opportunity to deepen their faith. New leaders are being grown, by God’s grace, and offering their gifts to the community of faith, and the wider community. And Amy van Wensem, our Music Minister, is back with us with renewed health and energy – thanks be to God!

I feel deeply privileged to be part of the leadership of this community of faith. The witness of your faithfulness, spiritual growth and caring have been inspiring for me, especially during my own medical leave from January 1 – February 18. Thank you for your prayers and encouragement. Special thanks are

You should know also of the great commitment and love expressed by those who serve you on Church Council in the following roles:

Dan Schaus – Chair

Andre Clouthier - Treasurer

Jackie Cox-Ziegler - Secretary/Presbytery representative

Mike McAuley – Property/Presbytery representative

Cheryl Thomas – Development Team

Russ Raine – Trustees

Cathy McAuley – Ministry and Personnel

Beth Bourke - Presbytery representative

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. You have been served faithfully and well over the last year!

As we look back on the last church year, considering the ministries we have been involved in, we celebrate all the ways we have been living God’s mission in our neighbourhood and the world.

The ministry of **Spiritual Transformation** included the following:

- The DISCIPLE Bible Study series was offered in the fall of 2017, a 12 week study of the New Testament. The DISCIPLE study includes daily readings (about 15 min per day) and a weekly DVD based discussion group. The group took a break at Christmas and look forward to returning to their studies.
- Pub Theology continued to provide casual opportunities to discuss some of life's big questions, meeting monthly at the Penny Farthing Pub in the back room. Questions included: "What is a good dying/death?" and, "Will we see our loved ones in heaven?"
- The Healing Pathway ministry continues to meet regularly for practice, and offers treatments as requested by members of the congregation. They also offer Healing Prayer during communion on Sunday mornings. The training uses a meditative, energy-based experiential approach. A United Church ministry, it was developed from the American Holistic Nurses Association's Healing Touch.
- the congregation received a grant to research ways of meeting the spiritual needs of Young Adults in our community, and Kelsey Lavoie and Emily Charter worked part-time to complete the research component. The Board will consider ways of moving forward with this project in the fall of 2018. Meanwhile a group of Young Adults in our congregation have begun meeting with me for friendship, support, and deepening faith together.

The ministry of **Welcoming and Hospitality** included:

- Our commitment to be an Affirming congregation continued as we expanded our sense of who is part of our community of faith, and how to be offer truly radical hospitality.
- After worship hospitality time continued to be hosted by teams of church members, coordinated by Cam Lyle. Cam has just retired from that ministry, and we are grateful to him for his years of service and hospitality!
- Greeters (coordinated by Pauline Stephen) and Welcomers (coordinated by Dawn Williamson) continued to make people feel welcome as they arrive for worship.
- The Refugee Committee applied for a second family to settle in Vancouver and are waiting for final approvals.
- We took part in the United Church's "Ministry Explorer" program from May to early August 2017. In this recruiting project, we hosted Alexandra Vancaeyzeele from St. Catherine's ON. Alex accompanied Rev. Michelle in her ministry, experienced our congregational life, and learned more about the United Church in BC. We were blessed by Alex's warmth and spiritual maturity, her flexibility and her willingness to jump right in and help out and take leadership, in many different ways.

The ministry of **Worship and Community** included the following:

- Worship experiences, both regular and occasional, continued to be the beating heart of the congregation's life. Regular Sunday morning worship fed us all in preaching, song, prayer and community sharing.
- Special worship gatherings included "The Longest Night: A Service of Solace" evening worship, early morning Ash Wednesday worship in the sanctuary, Good Friday worship, and Easter sunrise service with St Mary's Anglican and Fairfield United, at Willows Beach.
- Prayer and music in the style of Taize continued to be a beautifully grounding and meditative experience, of candlelight, chant, scripture, silence and prayer.
- Emergency pastoral care continued to be provided by Rev. Michelle Slater, with "keeping in touch" visits and phone calls offered by a variety of informal pastoral care visitors. In addition, a Pastoral Visitors Team was formed (while I was on medical leave) that continues to regularly visit and call members who are elderly, home-bound or have chronic illness, regularly. Great gratitude to this team of David King, Joy Gregory, Jan McArdle, Betty O'Coffey, Margaret Adsett, and Heather Davies.
- Seniors Tea with the Minister continued and was very well attended and appreciated. It includes a social time of conversation with tea and goodies, a short devotional or reflection and prayer by Rev. Michelle, and music and singing. Special thanks to the team of Susheela Dason, Laurie Hurlburt, Betty O'Coffey, Jacquie Schaus, and Mary Ann Tuller for their service and support.
- The Prayer Shawl Ministry continues to offer a tangible way of offering the support, love and comfort of Oak Bay United Church as a part of Pastoral Care. The shawls are knitted or crocheted at home with prayers and concern for those who may receive them. The shawls are brought to the office, blessed in worship and distributed when needed.
- The Wellness Group continued its faithful monthly ministry of devotions, support, friendship and prayer.
- The Men's Club Dinner continued with monthly evening of interesting conversation, good food, and fellowship.
- Congregational events and gatherings included the Fall Beach Day, Open House Sunday and BBQ, Christian New Year's Party at the beginning of Advent, Mardi Gras Pancakes and Karaoke, the Easter Egg Extravaganza, and the upcoming Sweet Summer Solstice BBQ and Dance.
- In response to a terrible tragedy in our community, the Board and other church leaders hosted a day of prayer, silence, and candle-lighting in the church sanctuary that was tremendously appreciated by those who took part. I was also asked to speak and offer prayer at the community-wide candlelight vigil at Willows Beach.

The ministry of **Serving the World** included the following initiatives:

- The Thrift Shop and Annex serve in a number of ways: diverting usable goods from the landfill; assisting those who need to move from their house to a smaller home or care facility; providing quality goods for a fraction of the cost to many in need; directing goods to various other organizations (like the Compassionate Warehouse) that help the needy in our community and around the world; and providing a strong support system of pastoral care and community, for the volunteers and customers alike.
- Regular appeals for various causes receive enthusiastic support, whether for Our Place Society, Cool-Aid Society, Burnside-Gorge Housing Society, and others.
- We continued our partnership with the Threshold Youth Housing Society, leasing them St. Columba House as a supportive home for 7 young people at risk of homelessness. It provides them with a stable and safe home base, along with staff support to complete high school, attend university, find meaningful work and develop life skills.
- The congregation continued our partnership with Ukulapha Outreach Project in Slangspruit township, South Africa. Slangspruit. Together we provide five special nutritious meals per year to the over 1,000 students at Slangspruit Primary School, where many of the children eat only one meal a day, the school lunch provided by the government. We also continued our sponsorship of Asanda Ngcobo to the Alexandra High School, a co-ed multiracial school with world-class academics and sporting facilities. The congregation has committed to pay Asanda's school fees until high school graduation.

We have seen a number of transitions in the **ministry staff** this past year. We said goodbye to **Amy Murray** in position of office administration and communications, and welcomed **Devon Tillie-Brownsey**. We are benefiting from Devon's organizational skills, initiative, energy and cheerful good sense as she made herself familiar with the church and office procedures, and has made the position her own.

We were blessed to welcome **Amy van Wensem** as our Music Minister, after releasing Gordon Miller to other ministries in the presbytery, and are grateful for her commitment and passion.

Our Children and Family Minister **Tressa Brotsky** continues to bring energy, passion, creativity and vision for a ministry that truly honours children and youth as well as reaching out in innovative ways to the wider community. Much of the congregation's spiritual and numerical growth is owing to Tressa's deep gifts and skills.

The youth ministry continued to be blessed by the leadership of **Zach Burrill** in the past year. His knowledge, deep faith, commitment were a gift not only to the youth, but to all of us.

We welcomed **Douglas Round** as our permanent custodian and thank him for his work to make our physical spaces clean and cared for.

I am grateful to the whole ministry staff team for offering their various gifts, all serving the mission of God and God's people in this place and time.

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.

Report of the Board Chair

The past year was one of information; concern; the unknown and hopefully a positive outlook for the future.

As mentioned in the Chair's report from 2016-2017 we the Board continued with a focus to ensure long term sustainability for Oak Bay United Church.

As all of you are aware we have begun the process of preparing the neighbourhood and congregational membership with information what the proposed neighbourhood housing project could look like. The project team has been working diligently on your behalf. The work in this endeavour continues and hopefully has a positive result in the coming months.

We have seen increased membership and a growing and vibrant congregation. Our Ministries extend well beyond the walls of the church building and we are excited about the work we are doing in our neighbourhood and within the wider community.

While the congregation can generate enough income to manage the operations of the church, it cannot generate enough funds to also maintain our aging infrastructure. With this in mind Rev. Michelle and her committee have recently initiated a Stewardship Campaign. The increased funding from those congregational members who are willing and able to do so, will assist with so many programs that the church continues to have.

May this coming year bring hope; comfort; peace and love.

Respectfully submitted

Dan Schaus

Chair

Music Ministry Report

It's been a full year for the music ministry at Oak Bay United Church. Gordon Miller announced his resignation as Music Minister as of August 2017 and the community grieved his leadership. The choir and congregation sent him off in style with a musical party at the church (with many talented soloists, including Michelle) and Gordon gave back with much gratitude and a song on Sunday morning. At the same time, Amy van Wensem was hired as the new Music Minister and the church welcomed her, her husband (and guitar player) Casey and her young daughter, Adia into the community.

Even with the transition in leadership, the music community remained strong. The choir was still very committed to leading the community in song and, while a few choristers moved onto other ministries, the choir also gained new members. The challenge for the choir is often finding enough space in the choir loft; we have between 20 and 40 singers on Sunday with new members regularly. The choir also tried a new and exciting program called "Family Choir" in Advent, which encouraged all members of the community (especially children and elders) to join in song. The evenings started with a simple supper and led into a family choir anthem each Sunday. Many felt that this was a touching way of authentically integrating family into each part of the church ministry. Other highlights of the year included a stunning and surprising solo by Alan in the choir and an especially touching "On Eagle's Wings" anthem during an emotional service in January.

The music ministry was also happy to offer music for the monthly Taize services on the fourth Sunday of each month. The attendants of this important ministry have found it very life-giving. Pam, Shannon and Dustin Demontigny have been instrumental in keeping this service consistent. Music has continued to be offered and appreciated at the Senior's Tea once a month; the hymn requests are always a hoot. Special services were also offered around Christmas and Easter with special music at each.

There was more transition in leadership as Amy struggled with her health this year. The choir and community was blessed to have Christine Chepyha fill in for Amy during her medical leave of absence for three weeks in January and from March 29th-May 13th. Under her leadership, the choir community stayed stable and committed. Amy was relieved to be able to return to work after receiving medication for a potentially life-threatening but treatable illness. She and her family have been immensely grateful for the support of their new community at Oak Bay United Church through this time. Amy is excited to continue to build the choir and also invest in the children of the congregation musically in the future.

Through out these changes, the music has uplifted the community. Worship is a key part of the life at Oak Bay United Church. On Pentecost, the choir was full of life and the children were singing loudly. This is the call of the music ministry. Worshipping together in a communal place. Holding each other up in song. Lifting up our little lives to a big God. This is our call in ministry.

Bring It On! Cabaret

Bring-It-On! Cabaret continues to happen on the third Friday of each month this year, starting in October and taking it's regular break in December and in the summer. Each month, the dedicated Cabaret Team (namely Janet Pretty, Cheryl Perry, Andre Clouthier, Bev March, Marilyn Samis, Mike Mcauley, Sam Beaver, John Hurlburt, Jim Ricks (alumni), Marie Kelly, Casey and Amy van Wensem) continues to put on an excellent show. Popcorn and goodies are still served and the team is grateful to have the creative energy of Janet Pretty back on board as she turns the space into a performance venue (along with her tasty door prizes). Though Amy's health has been a challenge, she has continued to plan this event while Andre and Cheryl have both stepped up to MC.

Starting in January, the committee agreed to try hosting this event upstairs in the hall. There was a lot of listening and deliberating over this change but, in the end, it was decided that this would be the new home for Cabaret. The artists who have performed in the space since January have all been very positive about the sound quality upstairs as have the audiences. Our shows have still been well received (between 70-110 people at each) though there has been some turn over in who attends. Certainly this year has been one of transition between leadership and space. It's actually surprising that the wider Oak Bay community has continued to support and attend this event in light of some neighbourly hesitations.

Certainly this continued support speaks to the high level of talent in our headliners, our continued commitment to the Open Stage and new performers and our \$5 admission fee. We are looking forward to our very professional headliner, Edie DaPonte as well as a young performers Open Stage in June. We also continue to welcome new Cabaret enthusiasts who might want to join our team and help us host this important community-building event. Please, consider joining our volunteer team; you will be well rewarded in good company, great snacks and a hoot of a show each month!

Submitted by Amy van Wensem

Children & Family Ministry

The children and family ministry of Oak Bay United continues to deepen and nurture our entire community's relationship with God, and inspire us to practice and offer ways as being followers of Jesus.

All Ages, Together

All Ages worship brings us all together so that we practice being a community of faith who are learning, growing, challenging, supporting and loving one another just as God loves us. All Ages worship offers a beautiful opportunity for mentoring our youngest congregation members into the fullness of worship practices. Our All Ages worship has been on these Sundays:

- Advent 1, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent 1, Easter, Pentecost, Fall Celebration (September), Thanksgiving

Sunday Morning Worship & Song

Sunday morning children's ministry focuses on naming and sharing the light of Christ, hearing the sacred Christian stories and parables, engage in wondering about the stories of our faith, responding to God's word and love with art, music, prayer and closer attention to the story of the morning, sharing the practice of breaking bread and giving thanks together, and building community between the children, leaders and families. We call our Sunday morning ministry time "Church" as it's a way of being in God's family together, rather than a place of top down teaching and instruction. Our Sunday morning children's ministry includes:

- Nursery (birth -2), PreSchool Kindergarten Church (3-5 years), Children's Church (5-10 years), Youth Church (11years+). We have over 30 children actively engaging in our children and youth ministries
- In Oct 2017, we hired a middle-school student to be in our Nursery every Sunday morning. It's a wonderful, attentive presence on our Sunday mornings!

Not Just Sundays

Mid-week ministry offerings live these same principles of building up our community of faith by loving and welcoming others, no matter what their beliefs or practices, and highlights the rhythm of our Christian church year. Our mid-week ministry offerings include:

- Point of Grace Drop-In Play Group – weekly
Family Meals – bi-monthly
Christian New Year's Eve Party, Easter Extravaganza, Camp Spirit Summer Day-Camp,

Children's Ministry Leadership

The children's church ministry team is a dedication group of adults from our congregation who have committed to the Godly Play way of offering children's ministry across all of our ministry programs and events. We have folks on the team who have been consistent leaders for decades, and others who are new to the team. The children's ministry is a strong element within Oak Bay United Church, and the leadership team needs to grow with the ministry. Grown ups of all ages and genders are encouraged to serve the children and families in our congregation, by offering your time and energy to the children's leadership team.

Vision and Goals of Oak Bay United's Children & Family Ministry

Children, youth and families are full participants in the life, work and community that is Oak Bay United. In the Children & Family Ministry we:

- Share the richness of biblical stories and other stories of faith, with open-ended, positive and non-judgmental engagement.
- Offer spiritual practices from our Christian tradition, and beyond, with a focus on: prayer practices, being in a community, serving others, and sharing what we have.
- Uphold Jesus as an important and positive influence in our lives, who is a current, relevant, on-the-ground teacher of love and radical welcome.
- Support families of all makes and shapes and orientations in tending to and understanding their children's unique, personal inner faith-life.
- Provide space for each child's own individual experiences of, and relationship with, God to deepen - in their own way, on their own terms.

The Oak Bay United Children and Family Ministry staff and volunteer team do this by thoughtfully designing programs and experiences to resonate with children and youth. The main principles of our program design and leadership with children and youth are that:

- Everything is for them (not the adults)
- It's about the process (not the outcome)
- We accompany (not direct)
- We notice and affirm (not evaluate)

Welcoming You Online, Too

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/kidfamjam/?hl=en>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KidFamJam/>

Play Group: <https://www.facebook.com/OBUCplaygroup/>

submitted by Tressa Brotsky

Youth Group

Youth Group primarily meets on Sunday mornings and for weekend community activities; however, it is much more than the sum of these gatherings. Youth group is a space for exploring the mysteries of our faith, forming and sharing Christian community, and learning what it means to be part of an intergenerational community of faith. In short, youth group is a microcosm of everything that happens within our congregation, adapted and responding to a particular group of growing young adults.

This year the youth group underwent change and growth, adding both new leaders and members. Wendy Allen and Laurel Hanson joined the group as volunteer leaders for weekend community activities, and we expanded the age bracket to include younger members who were ready to explore faith outside of the Godly Play model. In addition to these new members, we also saw an increase in participants from outside of the congregation during weekend events.

Responding to these changes, the summer and fall were periods of transition and community building. During the summer the Youth Group was integrated with the Children's Church and demonstrated and developed leadership skills as active participants in the larger program. The summer curriculum focussed largely on the Genesis and Exodus narratives, and when we transitioned back into meeting separately we continued to explore the Old Testament narrative. Familiarity with these stories allowed us to wonder about what the first Christmas was like for those who had lived under foreign occupation and through dark periods of waiting. After Christmas, Sunday discussion was focussed on the provocative preaching of Jesus, including the Sermon on the Mount and a range of parables. Youth were challenged to read and interpret scripture for themselves, and to wonder about the practices embedded in Jesus' teaching. Now, as we transition back into joint summer programming, the group is exploring themes of leadership and what it means to be part of a community of faith. Much like the church then, the Youth Group has and will continue to move through seasons, transforming what came before but also continually returning to important stories and elements of our community.

Outside of our Sunday programs we meet twice a month on weekends to share inclusive and positive community. These events are designed to include persons of all experiences and frequently welcome individuals who would not otherwise attend church, allowing our group to demonstrate and share Jesus' radical love outside of our usual Sunday community. In the summer we used the inclusive power of sport to begin building community among new and old members, which eventually culminated in collective, colourful painting of the youth room. Fall events continued to integrate high energy activities, but also included some more relaxed events, such as a board games night, to encourage deeper conversation and relationships. Foremost of these was our second annual Oak Bay United Youth Group Retreat, which was held at the church and featured guest-led workshops on reconciliation and Taize worship by Simon Owen and

Shannon and Dustin Demontigny, respectively. Finally, several events throughout the year collaborated with other groups and events to integrate youth into the wider community, including the Mix and Match Dinner, Diversity Dinner, Family Beach Day, pumpkin carving for the Holy Halloween Party, and Reindeer Games Community Caregiving.

In closing I think it important to celebrate the youth themselves. We are blessed with compassionate, creative, and courageous youth and it is a gift to help shape their lives and the contributions they will make to the world. We are truly blessed to be a blessing, so let us ask not what the youth can do for our congregation, but what we can be doing for our youth; I encourage all of us to begin thinking about how we might enrich and expand the community of support around our youth.

Thanks, and Blessings,
Zach Burrill

Presbytery Report

This report was respectfully submitted to Conference by Beverley Tracey, Chair Victoria Presbytery

Since last spring Victoria Presbytery entrusted its executive with the regular functions of presbytery leaving two circles – the Communities of Faith Circle and the Clergy Circle to support and nurture the well being of those two groups. In early fall we recognized that the transition work of moving from four to three courts needed to be shared by the many. In November we gathered for an evening of fellowship and feasting in a community that included the regular members of presbytery and many other key congregational leaders to launch our life together as we moved into the last months as a presbytery. The full court of Presbytery resumed monthly meetings so that the work of transitioning is understood and communicated to the communities of faith that make up Victoria Presbytery. We hired Carol Martin, past chair of the presbytery, to act as a consultant, communicator and researcher for the task of transition. Carol's passion and energy has been a great support for our life together. It is with passion and hope that we move forward into the next phase of our life as the United Church in southern Vancouver Island.

Oak Bay United Church's Lay representatives to Presbytery are Beth Bourke, Jackie Cox-Ziegler and Mike McAuley. Carol Martin sits on Presbytery as a Member-at-Large.

Ministry and Personnel Report

Ministry and Personnel Annual Report (2017-18)

The Ministry and Personnel (M & P) Team is a confidential, consultative body for the purpose of providing support and supervision to personnel, and to handle conflict resolution when needed. We are a communicating link between the mission of the congregation and activities of our staff. Current members include Cathy McAuley, Jacquie Schaus, Robbie Bagot and Steve Clark. We thank Lila Mee for her work on the team prior to her resignation when she moved out of town. The past year has been a time of unusually high numbers of challenges and staff changes including illnesses and staff turnover. Sad goodbyes were said to our long time Music Minister, Gordon Miller as well as our Office Administrator /Coordinator of Communications, Amy Murry. We welcomed Amy van Wensem as our new Music Minister and Devon Tillie-Brownsey in the office. Sam and Frances are welcome additions to the team for Sunday morning support with A/V and the nursery.

Key indicators to start tracking each year, measuring some of our activities include:

- * % of staff who have had an annual review within the past 2 years = 50%
- * hours of continuing education as a % of total hrs worked = 3%
- * hours of sick time (incl. restorative care) as a % of total hrs worked = 12%

We are very grateful for our team of dynamic, collaborative and visionary staff. They worked together and took on extra duties many times during the past year. We also want to thank those who helped cover for our staff including Julia Burke, Susan Whitehead, Rev. Keith Howard, Rev. Helen Waddell, and Christine Chepyha. A HUGE “THANK YOU” to the many volunteers who contributed and supported our staff, congregation, each other and our community during this challenging year when, despite the unexpected, we continued to grow our ministries and moved forward toward goals.

Respectfully submitted, Cathy McAuley, M & P Team Lead

Property Report

An affordable housing project arose from the development feasibility study reported on last year's annual report. It has been the major focus of property activity over the last year and will be reported on separately.

There is a significant backlog of major building maintenance. Some will be addressed as part of the project and the balance will not be required as buildings are removed to make way for new construction.

Last summer the front of Gardiner Hall was painted thanks to Jean Francois.

Minor building maintenance is ongoing and is done by volunteers where possible. Brian Maclean spends many of his Wednesdays at the church painting, changing lights and fixing things.

We have a contractor who cuts the grass but the rest of the landscaping and grounds work is done by volunteers. While there are others, Annette Morrice and Merle Newberg are often there a couple times a week tending the gardens. Brian is often a one man clean up crew when the leaves start to fall.

If you would like to volunteer to do power washing, minor repair work, painting or landscaping please let Devon in the office know and she will connect you with the right people. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted.

Mike McAuley

Property Chair

Affirm Ministries Report

Affirm Ministries – Oak Bay United Church, Victoria, BC

During our first year of being an affirming Ministry, we deepened our commitment to radical hospitality, which at its heart embraces inclusiveness and care and respect for those that are often marginalized, particularly as a result of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Our welcoming on Sundays makes a point of naming this inclusion of all, particularly LGBTQ+ people, those with mental illness, those who do not have enough money and food, those of different cultural, religious and spiritual backgrounds.

During the year, we have become a home for people looking for such a church. We have a growing and significant population of those with mental health challenges. LGBTQ2 people have increased in numbers both on Sundays and in other church programming. A heartwarming story of the past year says it well. A young Mom stood up and thanked OBUC for making our space a safe space for her child to acknowledge his transgender journey of transition from her daughter to her son. He is an active member of our church family.

We participated in the Pride Parade in 2017 and plan to do so in July 2018 as well. After the parade, church people and the Minister have a booth that celebrates our commitment to

LGBTQ+ equality and our Minister offers an apology on behalf of the Church for the ways we have marginalized people in the past.

Many of the members that were part of the Affirm team originally have stepped down and we are in the process of rebuilding our team this year.

We are hosting a one day “Spirit Pride Victoria” event, on Sunday, July 29th. This will include a Resource Fair, a panel discussion with Q&A with leaders of resource and support groups for the LGBTQ2+ community, and an evening presentation called “Inside Out Faith”, with singer-songwriter, advocate and speaker Jennifer Knapp. We are very excited about this event!

We have applied for a grant to hire a coordinator to research and build relationships for a proposed “Victoria Queer Church”, to form a faith community that is led and run by LGBTQ+ folks for LGBTQ+ folk. We hope this will be a place where people will grow and share their talents, gifts and calling within the group and more importantly outside the group to their broader communities.

We look forward to our second year of being an Affirming church with anticipation and gratitude.

Carol Martin

The Thrift Shop/Annex

ANNEX

2017-2018 has been a bumper year for our Thrift Annex-lots of new customers, all the way from Duncan to Sooke to Sidney and points in between. And still more come that say they didn't know we existed! The quality and quantity of donations continues to amaze us-estate furniture, jewelry, and art, as well as many other treasures. Makes unpacking every box and bag like Christmas!

Sincere thanks to all our helpers who carry on each week unpacking, sorting, washing or polishing, pricing and displaying the items despite some uncertainty about our future with the redevelopment project and its time lines. We carry on until we know we can't. Meanwhile we are open to suggestions as to how we might offer other services to the community and our potential residents, as we know the value of our outreach ministry, not only to our partners, but also to our helpers who enjoy the sense of community and comradery.

On a sadder note, two of our helpers died this year-Benita York and Glenda Scott. They were both” Great Gals” and we will miss their stories, smiles and laughter.

You will read in the” Serving the World” section of the report about the many ways we are able to give people a hand up, both locally and around the world because of donations to the Thrift

Shop/Annex. We feel blessed to be able to share the resources of the Thrift Shop/Annex to offer fellowship and tangible outreach to our community.

We're always happy to have more willing hands and strong backs to help. Come along any Wed. morning or Friday- you'll be surprized at what goes on!

SERVING THE WORLD

Many of our community outreach projects both local and worlds away, are possible because of donations to the Thrift Shop and Annex. Our congregation is always generous when we have special requests for money or specific goods.

The following local projects have been supported by Oak Bay United Church:

Mustard Seed: operates a food bank and offers programs in their Family Center to assist low income families. We have provided slow cookers, hand mixers and blenders and millions of mugs. Several members of the congregation help at the center on a regular basis.

Jackie Cox- Zeigler is our liaison. Email jcox.zeigler@gmail.com

Our Place: serves the homeless and vulnerable citizens of our city. We contribute to this vital non-profit society by:

Providing weekly bags of clothing, bedding, suitcases, pet items, and personal care items.
Thanks to Bob Erickson for his drop-offs.

Contributing baking and other foods for special events

Giving Angel Gifts at Christmas-a program initiated by OBUC many years ago

Several members of our congregation assist on a regular basis at meal times and in other ways

Making cash donations

Sandy Merriman House: provides emergency shelter and drop-in space for homeless or inadequately housed women and children. Thrift Shop sends weekly bags of clothing, personal care items, and small bags or suitcases for the women to carry their possessions with dignity. Heather Davies is our delivery person.

Burnside Gorge Housing Outreach Program: assists low income, often single parent families fleeing abusive relationships or newly arrived immigrant families with several young children to find safe accommodation. Families often have no money for essential furniture and household goods. Sometimes they need children's clothing and we always find cuddly toys and books to add to their collections. This year we helped 15 families with 22 children. The notes of appreciation from the Outreach Workers attest to the importance of this tangible support for families.

Threshold Housing Society; provides safe accommodation and daily living skills for at risk youth in our community. We have a 5year lease for Threshold House across our parking lot which accommodates 7 youth and programs are provided there for youth from their other 3 homes. Occasionally we fill requests for furniture for ‘graduating youth’ who move to independent living. This year some of our Thrift Annex helpers organized a fun fund raiser to assist youth wishing to go on to post secondary education programs. An evening of live and silent auction of art, jewelry, baskets, fishing trips, gourmet dinners, yummy food items was held on April 21. Over \$6000 was raised for bursaries, thanks to organizers Bryce Fradley, June Carver, Dee Burrows and Sandy Armitage, and participation of many helpers and members of the congregation and local merchants. A good time was had by all for a good cause.

Syrian Refugee Families: We continue to receive occasional requests for help for “government sponsored” families who do not have as much personal support as “privately sponsored” families.

Shelbourne Community Kitchen: partners with three churches in Shelbourne Valley to teach low income and vulnerable people cooking and food preservation. Canners, canning jars, have helped with this program.

Out of the Rain Youth Program: provides safe, warm, dry shelter and meals for homeless youth in Victoria downtown area. We provide warm sox, gloves, hats, scarves, back packs during the cold months of Oct to March.

Coldest Night of the Year Walk: this year donations were shared between Mustard Seed and Our Place. Oak Bay United’s team was small but thanks to the congregation and friends, raised a respectable amount. Jackie Cox-Zeigler was our captain.

We also reached out to support projects across the world:

Compassionate Resource Warehouse: This non-profit small but mighty organization partners with many organizations to provide essential items for people affected by poverty, disease, political upheaval or natural disasters around the world. We deliver bags of children’s clothing, especially new born size, toys, children’s books, Bibles, bedding, unbreakable dishes and pots, medical and school supplies weekly. One lady makes gorgeous afghans out of small bits of wool which brighten the day for a elderly patient. Two more containers were sent to refugee camps in Lebanon and we were able to help a school in Liberia who was setting up training in catering as a micro-economic project. For more information see their Facebook page www.facebook.com/CRWarehouseVictoria

Oliver Dason’s School Meal Program: Oliver continues to raise money to provide nutritious meals for school children in Slangspruit, South Africa. Our church has been a strong supporter of Oliver’s initiative and also provides funds to assist children to continue into High School.

Mission and Service Fund: A national United Church Fund, works with partners around the world for peace and justice. Over \$15,000 was contributed by the congregation in 2017
-Submitted by Betty Thacker

Thrift Shop

Our Thrift Shop continues to grow, a count made by our cashier was over 100 customers all happy with sales. Staff are now aging, Betty Moore now in care after many years as cashier. Lyn Williams and Ruth Wallace both suffered debilitating falls. Lila Mee now living in Mission.

We pray for volunteers with strong arms and backs, fortunately two helpers joined in the last few weeks which we hope will continue helping so we can all share the load.

A record breaking year, even with half price sales, word seems to have spread up island, many do drive quite a way once they hear our prices on Friday.

We are grateful for all donations which help supply Our Place and Value Village, also those in need. Christmas cards to those in custody and Our Place enables them to keep in touch with their families.

Thankfully we are all eager to share the many good things provided for the benefit of all. Thanks be to God.

Submitted by: Lucy Holland

Victoria Refugee Initiative

Our first sponsored family, the Sultan's, arrived in January 2016.

They have continued to live in the Quadra Village area. Their newborn, Amir is now one year old. In the latter months of our sponsorship we focused our energies in preparing the family to be able to function independently. Our legal sponsorship term was completed the end of January 2017.

To the relief of the family their eldest son, Sultan, arrived in Turkey from Syria a year ago. There is unfortunately the uncertainty of how and when he will be reunited with his family here.

We applied for a second Syrian family under the reuniting of families program in April, 2016. This is a family of 6 (four young children) with relatives living in Greater Victoria. In pursuing the status of the application at various points we learned last summer all that remained in the approval process of the family was the criminal and security checks. More recently we have learned this is still outstanding as there are many applications to be processed! Needless to say the family, our Team and the Victoria relatives are concerned. We continue to be hopeful they will soon be cleared and arrive in Victoria.

Our team is currently comprised of Gaye Sharpe, Frances Stocks (St. Aidan's), Helen Smith (the wider community) and myself. Our valued team member Gary Martin was critically ill and died last June. We celebrated his life and contribution to the Sultan family and our Team and remember him with great fondness. We very much appreciate your sponsorship support.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill White

Chair, Victoria Refugee Initiative Sponsorship Team

Healing Ministry

The Healing Ministry is based on the practices and techniques learned through courses of the Healing Pathway. The Healing pathway began at Naramata and has since spread across Canada. Participants gather in practice groups, usually under the auspices of a congregation, to maintain and expand their knowledge by practicing among themselves and by offering healing to anyone in need. Healing, as used in our ministry, refers to bringing the body, mind and spirit together for the person's good – whatever that means for them.

A Healing Ministry was approved by motion of the Board, for which we are grateful. Our group meets once a month when possible, with the guidance and support of a HP instructor, Jannice Foreman. In the past year, two more people have taken the Phase 1 (Introduction) and two others supported the course as helpers. Four of us took the Phase 2 (Where Three Or More Are Gathered), with two others working in support. Healing has been offered at communion services and on request at other times. Anne and Pearl have been providing frequent treatments to people in the community. We have worked with groups in other congregations and supported the Victoria Healing Pathway coordinating group and some of us have participated in the semi-annual Soulstice gathering of energy workers.

Our meeting schedule has been a challenge for some people to attend, so we intend to revisit and revise our program for next year hoping to extend our ministry to the congregation and beyond.

Deborah Kinsinger

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Prayer Shawl Ministry is one way we may put the love of Jesus the Christ into action. It offers the support, love and comfort of Oak Bay United Church by creating shawls to be used as a part of the congregation's Ministry of Pastoral Care.

The shawls are knitted or crocheted at home with prayers and concern for those who may receive them, brought to the office, blessed in worship and distributed at the discretion of Rev. Michelle. They are used as gifts of love and connection in the celebration of baptism or other special circumstances, and as reminders of the support and love of the congregation to folks in grief, illness or situations of stress and anxiety.

Many thanks are extended to the dedicated shawl creators who have donated approximately 120 prayer shawls in the last year. If you would like to participate in the Prayer Shawl Ministry, please contact the office for more information.

submitted by Helen Waddell

Wellness Group

The Wellness Group meets at 1:00PM on the 3rd Thursday of each month in the Community Hall for tea and conversation. The Group enjoys attending the Seniors' Tea once a month. We appreciate the support we receive from Rev. Michelle Slater and the University of Victoria Speakers' Bureau. New members and drop-ins are most welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Joy Gregory

Find All in the Heavens
Faith abounds
All is well
In Trials do we find strength
The support we need
Help is always around
Seen and unseen.

– Lotus Hills, 2009

Native Plant Garden

Many people in the community have been concerned that all the Garry Oak trees and oasis at the back of the duplex will disappear if the building project goes ahead. It is reassuring to see the schematic drawings of rain water management which include rain gardens, permeable paving and retention and enhancement of the gardens and tree canopy on site for use by residents and community.

Meanwhile, we continue to remove invasive plants, weed and water as necessary. Butterflies, birds, deer, racoons, and pesky squirrels all flit or amble through the garden, adding to the enjoyment of this tranquil space, though the deer are dreadful pruners. They seem to have a preference for the best plants just coming into flower! “Now you see it-now you don't” happens frequently. There are special things for children to discover and the back lawn provides a great space for play and laughter. The picnic table is always available and there is a bench at the far end for those who prefer solitude.

Anyone interested in helping to weed or water is most welcome-or just come to sit beneath the trees and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells. You will leave rested and restored.

Poinsettia Outreach



POINSETTIA PROGRAMME YEAR END REPORT FOR 2017

This year we delivered fifty poinsettia plants and two tins of cookies to the bereaved and shut-in members of our congregation. Since last year was so successful sending the flowers out the first week of Advent we did it again this year. The recipients thoroughly enjoyed having them in their homes for the whole Advent Season.

I wish to thank all the POINSETTIA PALS who took the time in a very busy season to visit with our Parish members. Your caring is much appreciated.

Ken & Margaret ADSETT
Beth BOURKE
Robert CILLISON
Rhiannon, Teagan & Owen COCKAYNE
Jacquie CORRIGAN
Heather DAVIES
Carol ELMS
Dustin DEMONTIGNY
Richard & Pam DEMONTIGNY
Bob & Maureen ERICKSON
Joy GREGORY
Graham HOWARD
David KING
Jan McARDLE
Mike McAULEY
Beverly MARCH
Dan SCHAUS

Carlton MONK
Neil MOSSIE
Bette McLEAN
Barb McLEOD
Anne NGUYEN
Jim RICKS
Jasmine ROBERTS
Jake SCHAFFER
Glenda SCOTT
Rev. Michelle SLATER
Pauline STEPHEN
Mary-Jean SMITH
Betty THACKER
Bill WHITE
Mary VAN ALSTINE
Dawn WILLIAMSON
Sarah SIGALET

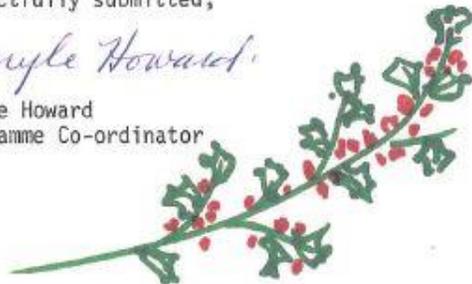
In this age of computers I have received messages from not only the recipients but also from the Poinsettia Pals that made the visits. So many of our parishioners who make these calls have been doing it for years and they would never let a Christmas go by without making these visits. It brings JOY not only to them but also to a SHUT-IN OR BEREAVED. What a wonderful gift to a person who may be feeling down.

"THANK YOU"

Respectfully submitted,

Meryle Howard

Meryle Howard
Programme Co-ordinator



Angel Gifts

In 1997, Carolyn Stevens, a member of our congregation, had an idea - an idea that would be implemented and, over time, expand far beyond the four walls of Oak Bay United Church. Carolyn felt that individuals in our congregation might be interested in doing God's work in a very small but direct way, by purchasing a Christmas present for a person using the services of Open Door. She knew that many of these people would not be receiving any gifts; that they seldom had the luxury of anything brand new to wear; and that warm clothing was always in need during the winter months. Our Place was asked to send some first names with sexes and sizes, and a few members of Oak Bay United were delighted to purchase gifts for these people. The Angel Gift programme was born.

Various churches and organizations heard about our initiative and felt that they too would like to participate. As a result, over the years, this outreach programme has expanded dramatically. Last year, 803 gifts were donated by 19 churches, 11 schools, 1 group of employees from a government office and several individuals. The Angel Gift programme has become a bit of a Christmas tradition in Victoria. To see all these gifts filling the pews at St. Aiden's Church, where they are now collected prior to delivery for the Our Place Christmas party, is heartwarming indeed. A bus driver in the city said he can always tell when the party has been held because so many of the people from Our Place are wearing brand new clothing the next day.

About 2 weeks before the programme begins, we let the congregation know that the sign up date is coming up. We show a very moving video made by Our Place, discussing this outreach programme and showing recipients from other years opening their gifts with great excitement and anticipation. There are also announcements at Sunday services and in the bulletin. Many of members of our congregation would have already purchased a gift, however, as they start keeping an eye out for something special to purchase as soon as the fall season begins. On the big date, donors choose the person or people they would like to buy for from a list provided by Our Place. The list includes first names with each person's gender, age and size so we can all try to give something that is as personal and appropriate as possible. We are encouraged to put a personal note in our gifts.

Many of us who participate in the programme say the Angel Gift is our favourite present to shop for each year. We get great satisfaction from buying for a specific individual and feeling that our gift is needed and will be truly worthwhile. It is a beautiful opportunity to share our own good fortune, live the real meaning of Christmas and to celebrate God's love. And it all started at Oak Bay United Church!

Submitted by Pauline Stephen

Halloween Bridge Luncheon

Once again we had a very successful bridge luncheon on Monday Oct.30, 2017. We began having the luncheon in spring 2007 following the example of the Gonzales UCW group that used to do it in years gone past. It was soon decided to do it once a year and we chose Halloween as the time. This year we had 23 tables of bridge with one games table. Many of our bridge players return year after year. We raised \$2680.50 which was donated to be used to buy a new BBQ for our community events and money towards the Godly Play curriculum. Each year we provide coffee and goodies when the players arrive and then a luncheon at noon including tea sandwiches and fancy goodies. We make the sandwiches the day before the luncheon and make the goodies at home. The sweets also come from members of our congregation. Thank you to those of you who provide the homemade sweets.

During lunch our music minister Amy van Wensem serenaded the group with her music. Our minister, Michelle Slater welcomed everyone to the event. We all wear witch's hats and some of us dress up. Our guests also may be wearing costumes. We do have a lot of fun. Thank you to everyone who made it possible: Dianne and Jerry Groneberg, Gail Hagen, Grace Smith, Heather Davies, Jacquie Corrigan,

Joanne Hill and Sarah and Craig Sigalet, Lyn Volk, Marjorie and Russ Raine, Marta Wishart, Maureen Erickson, Pauline and Dave Stephen, Heather Davies and Sandi Glendinning, Gaye Sharpe and Don and Betty O’Coffey. - Submitted by Betty O’Coffey

Chemainus Theatre “Bus Getaway Trip”

Betty Forgie retired from hosting this event since 2005. Clare King and Mary Ann Tuller have taken it over for the 2018 season. We have an average of 35 to 50 people who attend regularly. We also have the best seats in the house, the best price in town.

Envelope Secretary’s Report

My job as Envelope Secretary (now called Givings Secretary) is to record all monetary donations made to the church throughout the year. I provide our minister & treasurer with monthly reports and issue all the income tax receipts in the new year.

The Sunday morning collection is counted after church each week by one of five teams (three people each) and then deposited into the bank by the team leader.

Many thanks to team leaders Jacquie Corrigan (doing double duty as a team leader and also as a counter!), Lynne Rippon & Wendy Smith, and to counters Meryle Howard, David King, Dan Schaus, Aaron Hurlburt, Sharon Fisk, Lyn Volk & Cheryl Thomas for all your help. This couldn’t happen without you!

New for 2018: We have had five new volunteers join us this spring. Welcome to Pam Demontigny, Monica Pinch, Rachel Carriere, Pauline Stephen & Jim Fisk! We now have a team 5 who will cover the 5th Sunday of the month.

There are several ways to make your donation to Oak Bay United Church:

1. Cash or cheque into the collection plate.
 - anonymous cash cannot be accredited to you so no income tax receipt
 - with a cheque, your name & address would be recorded (if they are on the cheque) and an income tax receipt would be issued in the new year
2. Use church-issued numbered envelopes
 - applications available on top of the library shelves in the lower hall
 - confidential, as each number corresponds to a specific person or family
 - to remain confidential, please do not write your name on the envelope
 - income tax receipts are issued
 - there is no charge for envelopes
3. Pre Authorized Remittance, commonly known as “PAR”
 - a designated (by you) amount of money is withdrawn each month (around 20th of the month) from your bank account by head office of UCC
 - applications to start, change or cancel PAR are available on top of the library shelves in the lower hall
 - to start PAR, a void, blank cheque must accompany your application
 - please deliver all forms to the church office in a sealed envelope for your privacy
 - income tax receipts are issued and there is no charge to you for PAR

Respectfully submitted by

Marjorie Raine, OBUC Givings Secretary

Service Attendance

Month	Average	Average
	Attendance	Attendance
	2017	2018
Jan	138	148
Feb	135	149
Mar	128	141
Apr	174	145
May	122	139
Jun	131	
Jul	111	
Aug	100	
Sep	150	
Oct	127	
Nov	155	
Dec	160	

We Lovingly Remember

We lovingly remember each person - member, adherent, or supporter – who has died since our last report to the congregation. We also remember those who died and were formerly associated with our community.

Jorgen “Yawn” Bass

Lois Bell

Ruth Godwin

Trevor Haigh

Glenda Scott

Morrison Smeltzer

Mary Van Alstine

Benita Yorke