



St. Aidan's in the Beach

ADVENT NEWSLETTER

November 2021

Dear Friends,

Advent begins on Sunday November 28 - the beginning of the new year in the Christian tradition, and the beginning of a new chapter in St Aidan's life. In Advent we will re-open the church and be able to welcome you back in person, in the renovated building. Yes, there is still external work to be done, but the long road of closure and construction is almost finished, and we can re-enter with great gratitude for all the labours that got us here.

It will be a joy to be able to celebrate Christmas in the church, and I know there will be eagerness from the wider community, not just the parish, to see inside. So we need to plan our Christmas services thoughtfully and carefully, following the guidance of the diocese as well as the protocols of the province.

In order to safely welcome the large Christmas congregations, we will be offering these services:

CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24

- 4 pm:** Eucharist with children's pageant video. Proof of vaccination not required.
- 7 pm:** Eucharist with children's pageant video. Proof of vaccination required.
- 9 pm:** Traditional Christmas eucharist. Proof of vaccination required.

CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25

- 10:30 am:** Eucharist with proof of vaccination required.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 26

- 10:30 am:** Eucharist with baptism. Proof of vaccination not required.

Thank you to those who completed our poll so that we could get a sense of your wishes for Christmas worship. As with so many things during this pandemic, we've had to work hard just to do what used to be completely taken for granted during "normal time." And I'm so grateful for the amazing

energy and creativity of the St Aidan's leadership, volunteers and community.

Our faith is an incarnational one: that means we live, work and deal with down to earth matters and all their complexities and challenges, while holding fast to our faith in a God who meets us there, leads us through, and brings transformation.

Jesus was born in a far from perfect situation: his parents homeless, his country occupied and oppressed, his cradle an animal feed trough. But we celebrate that birth because he is God-with-us, Emmanuel: God meeting us in the midst of our failures and sin and mess, and raising us up to become something better, something hopeful, something redeemed.

With Advent hope,
Lucy

Altar Flowers

We are all looking forward to seeing our fellow parishioners again after nearly two years and eagerly looking forward to seeing our newly renovated church building. Along with seeing the new space we also take comfort in seeing the familiar such as having beautiful fresh flowers on the Altar every Sunday.



These Altar flowers are paid for by members of the congregation as an offering of thanksgiving to God. Fresh flowers are a wonderful way to remember loved ones, to celebrate milestones, in gratitude for our blessings and to brighten everyone's day.

The cost for two vases of flowers is \$80. A donation for the Aumbry Candle is also available for \$40 for a full month. You may dedicate the candle as you would the flowers.

If you would like to continue this wonderful observance please contact Hian-Lie Liem.

Children and Youth Ministry

Gemma Snider

The past few months have felt almost normal in our Children's ministry! We have been embracing God's creation with outdoor Sunday school programming each week since September. We are fortunate to have many of our families on board and have been joined by 10-20 kids each week. Our amazing volunteers get all the credit for making this happen each Sunday morning during the 11:30 am in-person service. We have been really enjoying the space to run and play, and the beauty of the beach!

One very exciting addition to our ministry has been Grace Rockett who officially came on board as a youth leader in October! She has been spending her Sunday mornings with our grade 5+ Jr. Youth group, and will continue to lead this group in some special events.

As we move into the Advent and Christmas seasons, we are excited to focus our energy on the nativity story and pageant. We look forward to keeping this tradition going through all the challenge and change the past 2 years have brought! We can't wait to share the Christmas story with you once again this Christmas Eve!



Recent Justice Initiatives

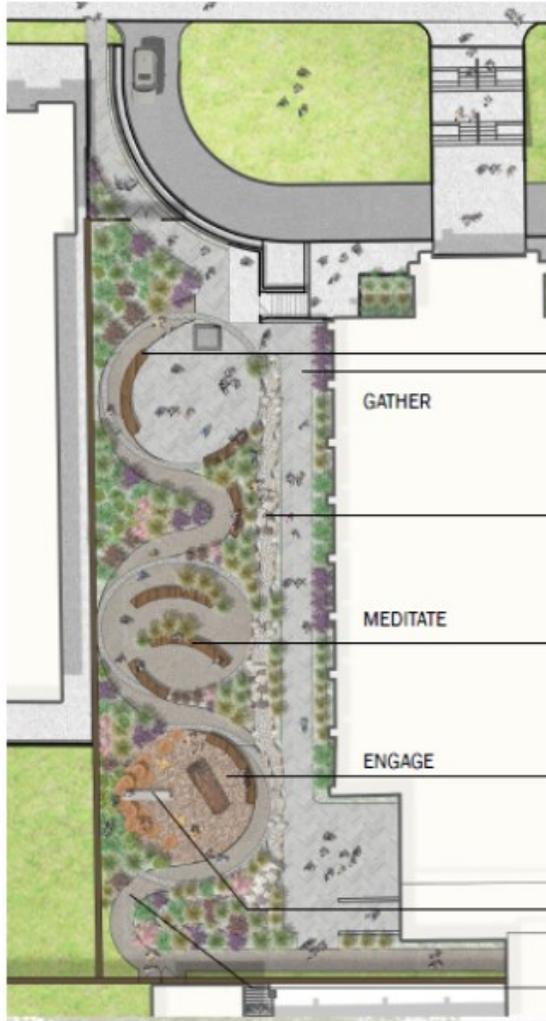
Jeff Nowers, Associate Priest

The work of justice is ongoing at St. Aidan's. Three initiatives in particular deserve mention. First, many of you know that I'm part of the board of directors of Toronto Urban Native Ministry. TUNM is a partnership of the United Church and the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, with three full-time staff on the ground. To support this work, St. Aidan's recently made a generous contribution of \$3,000 to TUNM. At the last TUNM board meeting, there was serious concern that the annual solstice feast organized by the staff would not go forward because of budgetary constraints. But when the cheque from St. Aidan's arrived, there was relief and jubilation. The solstice feast would happen after all! The generosity of our parish has allowed a key part of what TUNM does to continue and flourish.

Second, as part of our continuing learning, we are undertaking an Advent-Epiphany study series, focusing on the new book by climate scientist (and Christian) professor Katharine Hayhoe, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* (found wherever good books are available). This series will be held on Zoom together with our friends at the Church of St. Andrew-by-the-Lake, the little parish on Toronto Island. We will be meeting Tuesdays at 7:30pm: Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 14, Jan. 4, Jan. 11. The Zoom link is <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/81068875566>. Each session will be facilitated by representatives from St. Aidan's or St. Andrew's. This is a great opportunity to learn with others how to keep hope in the foreground of the most pressing crisis of our time.

Third, I am finalizing a 2022 calendar of Black Canadian Saints. This resource features a weekly focus on an important figure of African descent who has impacted history in a significant and often unrecognized way. The calendar contains a short bio of each saint followed by a prayer of thanksgiving. It is suitable for household use, especially for families wanting to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of Black history around the cultivation of spiritual disciplines. The calendar will be circulated after Christmas.

WEST GARDEN FOR ST. AIDAN'S



DETAIL PLAN



SECTION

The West Garden proposal is for a beautiful, soul-restoring multi-purpose space for the use of the parish and community. Incorporating Care of Creation practices, the plans will provide an accessible place for outdoor worship and gathering, meditative spaces and a natural children's play area. The existing mature oaks (which are a keynote species) and maples will be a focal point for the natural garden as will a bioswale for storm water management.

Professionally designed on a pro-bono basis by Bruce Mori and the landscape architects at the IBI group, the West Garden is imagined to be a complementary adjunct to the newly renovated indoor space.

The concept drawing to the left is being revised to incorporate the best of the three plans that were submitted to the design competition

Margie Betts,
West Garden committee

STRONG ROOTS, NEW SEASON.

ST. AIDAN'S IN THE BEACH



St. Aidan's Capital Campaign

Following the results of the recent Feasibility Study, St. Aidan's Capital Campaign team has begun preparing for a new season. We are pleased to announce that the committee has now finalized its roster, prayerfully envisioned a theme for the campaign, and refined our Case for Support in light of the initial Study.

That Case for Support highlights five initiatives to be executed over the next several years, for which we aim to raise \$500,000:

1. Masonry Repair & Restoration
2. Stained Glass Conservation & Restoration
3. A Revisioned West Garden
4. Continued Funding of an Associate Priest
5. An Expanded Youth Ministry

Along these lines, the campaign's theme pays tribute to our history while also gesturing towards this moment's unprecedented opportunity for outreach. We see this drive as a call to care for the spaces that reflect our heritage and situate our worship together, but it's also a challenge to extend that care outward into sustainable new communities and spaces for generations to come. Rather like a tree, roots firmly planted, we imagine St. Aidan's as a place of nourishment and stability, arising into a daring new season of faithfulness. The campaign logo playfully repurposes an image from long-time parishioner and celebrated artist, Doris McCarthy (d. 2010). Our strong-rooted tree evokes upward movement, calling to mind solid traditions that nevertheless crown with the promise of new and renewed life.

Committee members include Martha Asselin, John Brewin, Carissa di Gangi, Courtney Ebner, Paul Ebner, Linda Fawcett, Amy Ferguson, Adam Gordon, Alex Hernandez, Victoria Prince, Marguerite Rea, Lucy Reid, Philip Robson, Brian Snider, and Gemma Snider. M&M International is supporting the project.

Although the Campaign's public kick-off is planned for early 2022, we continue to accept donations from those eager to support this emerging cause. Those interested in exploring the Case for Support are encouraged to visit here: <https://staidansinthebeach.com/giving/pages/capital-campaign>

Farewells

Yvette Gudas is leaving St. Aidan's after five years of service as our music director. Her musicality and always pleasant personality will be greatly missed. She brought new music to the parish and a fresh approach that has been much appreciated by the choir, soloists, and junior choir. She is also to be praised for her ability to adapt to our virtual services for the past year and a half. Her last service is scheduled for December 12, and we wish her well in her next church position.

A selection committee has been formed to develop a job posting for the position and will be reviewing applications and auditioning a short list of candidates in the coming weeks. The committee members are Lucy Reid, Sheila Dunn, Kelsie Hernandez, Grace Rockett, Rob Cook and Courtney Ebner. Please reach out to them if you have suggestions to offer.

In the interim Caroline Ham has once again offered to accompany the choir and congregational hymn singing on the organ and piano. We are very fortunate to have her in our parish! Many thanks to Sheila Halladay for playing at the Christmas Eve services. The St. Aidan's Regrets band will contribute as they have in the past and if anyone else has a desire to augment our music while we conduct our search please contact Lucy.

We also bid farewell to Urla Duncan, our lead soprano. Urla came to us through John Campbell when he was our interim music director in 2016-17. She has brought her rich musicality to the choir very faithfully ever since, and has recorded a hymn each week for our Zoom services through the pandemic. We are sorry to see her go, and wish her and her family well.

Rob Cook



Raising Up a Second Deacon

"There's room for more than one deacon in the parish"

Michael Van Dusen

Lucy Reid and I began talking of raising up a second deacon for the parish of St. Aidan's last year. The primary role of the deacon is spelled out in the ordination service when the bishop says:

"As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the holy scriptures...

You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example...

You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist ... in the ministrations of God's word and sacraments, and to carry out other duties assigned from time to time. At all times, your life is to show that in serving the helpless you are serving Christ ..."

When considering the role, another dimension involved asking what kinds of profile another parish deacon might have. A younger person, with a family, a deep spiritual life and a demonstrated commitment to outreach were among the criteria.

One Sunday after a service in Memorial Hall, I asked Michael Barrett if he had considered the diaconate. His first reaction was, "You're kidding, right?" Together, he and I went to find Lucy who told him the suggestion was serious.

Since then, a parish discernment committee has met to review the role of a parish deacon, and to interview Michael. He has also met with Bishop Kevin who has given preliminary approval to moving his candidacy forward.

The congregation knows Michael as a tenor, as a parent with Marcelle of Mica and Lucas, as an entrepreneur who created a sanitizing business to address organizations' needs for deep cleaning during the pandemic, as an organizer of fundraising events with his opera colleagues and recently as an occasional preacher. What people may not know is that Michael is also a serious woodworker.

When Ernst von Bezold was palliative, a board of his bed frame broke. I sent pictures of it to Michael asking his advice. Michael said, "No problem. I can fix that easily." He was at Ernst's place in Burlington within the week. He brought wood, brackets, screws and glue. Michael fixed the frame so that when the apocalypse comes it will be the last thing that remains intact.

Beyond responding to offbeat calls for help, Michael has become a valued facilitator in the men's Ignatian Spirituality Project, (ISP) which focuses on the spiritual lives of men recovering from drug or alcohol addiction. (There is a separate program for women.) He takes part in information sessions at the various recovery homes and relates the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In late November, he helped facilitate a weekend retreat at Villa St. Joseph, a retreat house in Cobourg. In addition to drawing on personal experience Michael has read about Ignatian spirituality and taken part in various forms of training for retreat facilitators.

He has also volunteered to help raise money for Restorative Justice Housing Ontario (RJHO), which provides rent geared to income for people coming out of prison who have no family or friends to live with and insufficient funds to rent in the Toronto housing market. Raising money for the formerly incarcerated is a "hard sell" compared to many other charities, but Michael agreed to lend his hand.



Michael needs to be interviewed in the new year by a diocesan review committee. He will also have to undertake some theological studies, undergo a day of psychological tests and interviews at the Southdown Institute and have further training in the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Toronto diocese.

If Michael is approved by the diocesan committee and Bishop Kevin St. Aidan's congregation will be asked at our Annual Vestry Meeting next February to approve raising him up as a second deacon for the parish, and Michael will continue the journey on which he has started.

Renovation Update

As finishing touches are underway, we are hopeful for a building handover date of mid-December. We will be looking for volunteers to assist with reopening tasks including cleaning and moving furniture the week of Dec. 14 to prepare for in-person services on Dec. 19 and Christmas. If you are able to volunteer, please contact Colin Snider.

Whither the Next Steps for Eco-Spirituality at St. Aidan's?

John Brewin, Chair, the Eco-spirituality Group

Two years ago St. Aidan's community responded to the call to highlight "eco-spirituality" as a foundational ministry of this church.

We've undertaken some useful initiatives.

We've raised the profile of the issues within the congregation and provided leadership in the broader community. We have prayed about it, studied it, organized public meetings, pressed our elected representatives, taken steps to get our own houses in order.

The challenges remain. The work is far from complete.

We have organized our programs around three themes, action, study and spiritual development. We'd like to continue in this way. Accordingly we look forward to eco-spirituality continuing to be a significant theme in our liturgy, our study sessions, our prayers and reflections, and in our actions, individually and collectively, in our own lives and in the larger community.

As a 21st century Christian community one of our main contributions to effecting the change that the climate crisis requires is a spiritual or cultural revolution. How we are a community, religious or otherwise, is in learning to work together, how we live in peace with our environment rather than at war with it. As we have discovered in developing our ministry our traditions have much to offer the undeniable fact that global climate change is forcing us to learn "new" ways to living together with our neighbours and with nature.

Study and spiritual development must lead to action, in our own lives and in the societies in which we live.

It means political action in coalition with others who share our values. St. Aidan's was the first religious community to join the Toronto Climate Action Network. We joined with other faith communities in this area to host a candidates meeting in the recent federal election focusing the discussion on the climate change crisis. New opportunities will present themselves in the next two years for pushing climate change onto the political agenda.

We are learning that our houses and other buildings are a major culprit in carbon emissions. We can do

something about that, if we get our own priorities sorted out, working together and, as a faith community, providing leadership. Our newly renovated church building and the West Garden will be great examples of that.

Above all we can inject a note of realistic hope into the struggle to keep going on this path towards a better world, one that reflects God's dream for this awe-inspiring planet that is our island home.

PS: In the spring of 2020 we did a survey of the congregation. It's time for an update. We will be introducing the new survey to the congregation shortly. When it comes out, please take the few minutes it will require for you to fill it in and return it, as directed. You will help us develop upcoming programs. Thanks for your help.

Photo: *Part of the group who spent a day on retreat on Toronto Island in October, during our Season of Creation.*

